

REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

23

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation



Plus - Tertiarisation : A Contemporary Myth

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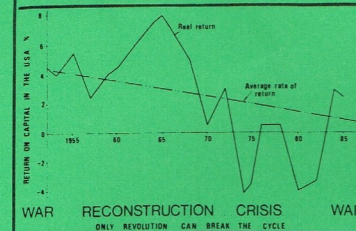
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THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF CAPITALIST DECADENCE

& MONEY, CREDIT AND CRISIS

COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION

of the C.W.O.

Revolutionary
Perspectives 23

Spring 1986

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(Details of subscription rates are given
on p.38 of this issue.)

TERTIARISATION : A CONTEMPORARY MYTH

It is a central axiom of Marxist theory that the working class is the agent of historical change from capitalism to socialism. The collective nature of the class' productive activity which makes it the object of capitalist exploitation, makes it at the same time the subject of revolutionary action. In addition, it has always been the standpoint of revolutionary communists, that a specific section of the working class, the industrial proletariat, plays the vanguard role in such a process, because of its specific weight and power in the capitalist economy. These workers have always been the most active and conscious in any class or revolutionary battles in the past, from the Russian Revolution of 1905, through the anti-war struggles and revolutionary wave 1917-23, to the more recent revival of class struggles from France in 1968, to the recent events in Poland. We pass over these points quite briefly and without elaboration, because they themselves are not the topics of the following text. This concerns itself rather with a Marxist critique of the argument that what we said above, though possibly once true, no longer is so, due to structural changes taking place in the capitalist economy.

From a wide variety of sources come the same themes; that the industrial working class in the advanced capitalist economies is in the process of disappearing (relatively and or absolutely), and that we are witnessing the "tertiarisation" of society, that is the transformation of its wage earners into non-productive hirelings in the so-called "service" sectors of the economy. Starting with the works of Bell in the USA, these ideas were further

propagated by Goussier in France, and have found their latest convert in Hobsbawm, guru of the Euro-communists and soft left of the Labour Party. Though the idea of tertiarisation attracts support from a wide variety of political sources, Euro-communists ecologists, leftists and right-wingers are naturally divided in their analysis of its causes and political consequences. But before we get carried away into a discussion of these, it is necessary to grasp the correct end of the stick, and ask whether in fact the trends ascribed to today's labour force are correct. And even if they are correct, whether we are dealing with a cyclical or a structural trend, that is whether any "disappearance" of the working class is due less to "profound socio-economic changes", than to the capitalist crisis and its effects. Bourgeois futurologists may make names for themselves by the extrapolation of last month's facts into a supposed long term tendency. Marxists examine so called facts in the framework of historical materialism, and an elaboration of capitalism's dynamic.

It is as well to preface the statistical essay which follows, with an overture on bourgeois ideology. Ever since the working class appeared, the bourgeoisie has been trying to make it disappear through various ideological attacks. These have generally, like the capitalist economy, taken a cyclical form. As a general rule, we can say that in times of prosperity, the cry of the bourgeoisie and its apologists has been that the working class, through its participation in the prosperity of the boom years, has become "embourgeoisified". The idea

that prosperity dissolved class boundaries was not coined for the first time in the 50s and 60s by bourgeois sociologists, but was also the stock in trade of many at the turn of the century, including Bernsteinian revisionism.

But along comes the capitalist crisis; prosperity vanishes, and so too does a large part of the working class-into unemployment. At times of mass misery such as these, embourgeoisification theories are rather inappropriate. So out rush bourgeois scribblers with theories of tertiarisation, or the disappearance of the working class. The themes which occupy today's writers were also to the fore in the crisis of the 1930's, and even as far back as the Great Depression of 1873-96, representatives of the bourgeoisie in Britain, such as Joseph Chamberlain, raised the spectre of "de-industrialisation". An exploration of these seams of bourgeois ideology would be a fascinating exercise, "were there but world enough, and time". But it will be much more politically useful to rather demonstrate empirically that tertiarisation is a myth. For, up to the onset of the economic crisis, the proletariat was growing absolutely, and at least maintaining its position relatively, as a proportion of the world's population. The destruction of manufacturing employment, and growth of the service sector since, are phenomena associated with the economic crisis, rather than structural alterations in the capitalist labour force.

A DEFINITION OF CATEGORIES.

The categories used by bourgeois economists, whether in analysing the capitalist economy, or its labour force are not those of Marxism. Nevertheless, since it is the bourgeois economists who quarry the statistics, we are obliged to use their categories, with caution and qualification. Bourgeois economists, for example, lump miners together with self-employed farmers and fishermen as "primary Industry". Similarly, into the service, or tert-

itary sector, they cast transport and post and telecommunications workers, along with advertising executives. For industry proper, they use two terms. Manufacturing industry is used to describe those areas where a moveable commodity is produced, while the term production industry also includes construction and utilities (power, water, etc.) Statistics for such sectors lump everyone in them, whether they be shop floor workers or managers, together. Nevertheless, such figures can be used, with qualifications, to indicate general trends in the capitalist labour market.

The terms "de-industrialisation" and "tertiarisation" also need a little elaboration, since they are not exactly synonymous. De-industrialisation implies a relative and generally absolute loss in manufacturing employment; in the advanced countries, it is argued, this is associated with the relative and absolute growth of the service sector, ie with "tertiarisation". But in the peripheral areas, where the primary (agricultural) sector is so vast it is possible for BOTH industrialisation AND tertiarisation to occur at the same time; indeed, this appears to be happening. For the advanced countries, however, the terms tertiarisation and de-industrialisation tend to be used interchangeably.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Capitalist society manufactures not only commodities, but myths. Once upon a time "England's green and pleasant land" became covered with "dark satanic mills", in which everyone bar the capitalists, aristocracy and peasants laboured. It is the supposed passing of such a world that tertiarisation theory describes.

In the nineteenth century, Britain was the most advanced capitalist country in the world, with the majority of the world's industrial proletarians. Marx describes the contradictory situation this led to;

"Lastly, the extraordinary productivity of modern industry, accompanied as it is by a more extensive and a more intensive exploitation of the working class, allows of the unproductive employment of a larger and larger part of the working class... According to the census of 1861, the population of England and Wales was 20,066,244. If we deduct from this population all who (do not work) there remain in round numbers eight million of the two sexes of every age. Among these eight million are;

Agricultural labourers	1,098,261
All employed in textile factories	642,607
All employed in coal mines and metal mines	565,835
All employed in metal manufactures	396,998
The servant class.	1,208,648

All the persons employed in textile factories and in mines, taken together, number 1,208,442; those numbered in textile factories and in metal industries taken together, number 1,039,605; in both cases less than the number of modern domestic slaves. What a splendid result of the capitalist exploitation of machinery! " (*Capital*, Vol 1, p420-1.)

(Note here that Marx describes servants as belonging to the working class.)

The existence of vast, nonproductive, or "tertiary" sectors in the capitalist economy is thus no new phenomenon, though the specific occupational content of these sectors may change with time. The image of a previous period when there existed little apart from capitalists and industrial proletarians is a myth. The specific weight of the

industrial sector in any country will depend firstly on its competitiveness in the world market; the greater its competitiveness, the larger its industrial sector. Secondly, it will depend of whether the capitalist economy is in crisis; all countries, weak or strong will suffer a reduction in manufacturing employment in a crisis.

Theorists of tertiarisation on the other hand, argue quite differently. For them there is a long term structural decline in manufacturing employment in the metropolises. The material reasons why this should be so are not always clear in their writings, but generally the argument goes that it is easier to increase productivity in manufacturing than in the services, and hence labour will switch from the former to the latter over time. A rival argument is that "demand" for services increases employment there. What is clear about these theories, is that they are not underlain by any value analysis. They ignore the fact, noted by Marx, that capitalism is able to employ unproductive labourers because it exploits productive ones. It is from the surplus value produced by the latter, that the revenue for the employment of the former is creamed off. A "service economy", which some of the tertiarisation thinkers wax enthusiastic about, is thus an economic impossibility. The manufacturing sector of the bourgeoisie, the CBI, and its spokesmen like Weinstock, are able to see this basic fact, while being unable to provide a solution to the "de-industrialisation" of the UK, apart from further lowering wages.

THE EXAMPLE OF BRITAIN.

As the first capitalist nation, Britain was able to steal a march on its competitors, and establish a dominant position on the world market, as well as carving out for itself the largest Empire in world history. But Britain's share of world industrial production, which had been over 50% in 1851, had declined to about 20% by 1914. The effects of two world wars combined with increased international

competition, led to a significant relative decline in the position of the UK economy. And the loss of Empire after 1945 added to the strains. Surely "a suitable case for tertiarisation"?

But up to the onset of the economic crisis of capitalism in the later 1960s, there was NO decline, either in absolute or relative terms, in manufacturing employment in the UK, over a period of a century. As one bourgeois commentator put it,

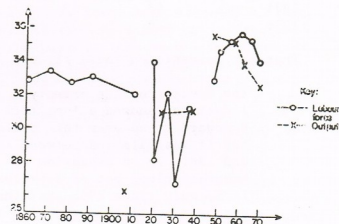
"(Statistics) demonstrate how difficult it is to sustain the thesis of de-industrialisation for a mature economy like the UK when one considers changes over a period of a century. Indeed the proportion of the labour force engaged in manufacturing activity was just about the same in 1970 as it was in 1871. This proportion certainly did not remain constant throughout, but if we extract from cyclical fluctuations, its general level was much the same in the inter war period as it was in the fifty years before WWI. There was, however, a trend increase in manufacturing's share of the labour force between the mid 1930s and the early 1960s." ("UK Industry and the World Economy; a Case of de-industrialisation?" A. Singh, in Cambridge Journal of Economics 1977, 1 p123.)

The table reproduced below illustrates his point. It shows that the historical high point of manufacturing employment came in the mid 1960s, ie at the height of the postwar boom, when about 38% of the population was employed in manufacturing; five percentage points higher than the nineteenth century average.

When we look at the absolute figures which follow, the picture is even clearer. They show that in the mid 1970s there were 70% more industrial workers in Britain, than there had been at the turn of the century. The turnaround in manufacturing employment came

at the beginning of the 1970s, with the onset of the economic crisis, not as the result of any long term secular trend.

SHARE OF MANUFACTURING IN UK
LABOUR FORCE 1861-1970.(%).



(Source, Singh. Loc cit.)

EMPLOYMENT IN UK MANUFACTURING(000s).

1907	4951
1924	5383
1930	5444
1935	5694
1948	7308
1951	7829
1959	8071
1966	8584
1976	7246

("Labour Supply and Employment Trends" A. Thatcher, in De-Industrialisation ed. Blackaby 1979, p32).

Lack of any statistical evidence for the idea of a long term decline in manufacturing, and expansion of service employment before the crisis is given in the article quoted above, by Thatcher. These figures show that the decline in manufacturing and expansion of service employment only date from the early 1970s; in fact the latter only regained its 1931 share of employment in 1966. manufacturing employment on the other hand, remained stable until the beginning of the 1970s, after reaching a plateau:

PROPORTIONS OF THE WORKFORCE IN
DIFFERENT SECTORS, UK 1931-76(%).

	Primary	Production	Services
1931	12	37	50
1951	9	44	47
1961	7	44	49
1966	6	44	50
1971	4	43	53
1976	3	40	57

Thatcher comments on these figures,

"the decline of the primary industries showed a long term downward trend over this period, but it was balanced between 1931 and 1966, by an expansion of manufacturing, not of services. It is only since 1966 that there has been a major contraction in the production industries, and an expansion of services."(Op. cit, 32.)

Why has this been the case?

Unemployment always hits manufacturing first, due to its fiercer world market-place competition, and more immediate profit orientation. Thus, though manufacturing workers are less than half the employed population, they are the vast bulk of the unemployed. What we have seen in the last 15 years in the UK is not the disappearance of the proletariat, but the transfer of millions of manufacturing workers into the ranks of the unemployed.

Paradoxically, some service sectors are able to increase their parasitic appropriation of surplus value during a crisis; banking is an example, due to high interest rates, which always accompany a low rate of industrial profit. They are thus able to increase their range of activities, and their staff. The vast numbers of unemployed require an increase in the number of social security clerks, and tertiary education is expanded to warehouse the masses of young unemployed. The increase in service employment in the UK in the last decade and a half, has been almost entirely due to the expansion of

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employment of part time, low paid female or youth labour, in sectors such as those above. From 1970-76 in the UK 80% of all new jobs were part time, and 85% of these went to women. What we've seen is less a profound change in the class structure, than the forcing of proletarian women into such jobs, because of the high levels of male unemployment.

Despite the propaganda of the bourgeoisie, such "jobs" are no solution to the unemployment problem, since their expansion is limited by the ability to extract surplus value from those still in productive work. Additionally, they are not jobs which allow for the reproduction of labour power, ie the maintenance of a proletarian family. Capital must employ productive workers, to be able to employ unproductive ones,

"productive labourers as such are paid from capital, unproductive such from revenue...What a convenient arrangement it is that makes a factory girl to sweat twelve hours a day so that the factory proprietor, with a part of her unpaid labour can take into his personal service her sister as a maid, her brother as a groom, and her cousin as soldier or policeman." (Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Pt.1, p200-1)

The expansion of employment in the service sector makes profits for individual capitalists, but it is a drain on the rate of profit overall; thus, as we will show, it has certain objective limits.

ANALYSES AND REMEDIES.

Britain has experienced a dramatic loss of manufacturing employment in the last 15 years. But this is no law of movement of the capitalist economy, or even an international phenomenon (see below.) Rather, we are witnessing the collapse of certain sectors of the British economy, due to inability to compete in the international, or in its own domestic, market. Britain has done relat-

ively worse than other capitalist countries, because of its low productivity growth rate, and overvalued currency due to North Sea oil.

In Britain, those who have concerned themselves with the issue of de-industrialisation, have been those most vocal on the capitalist crisis in general, the left wing of the Labour Party and its left wing hangers on. The clarion call on the theme of de-industrialisation was sounded by Wedgwood Benn in 1975, when as Secretary of State for Industry, he stated that,

"The trend to contraction of British manufacturing industry which we are now suffering, has gathered force in the last four years... During the years 1970-4 there was a 7% fall in employment in manufacturing in Britain while it was rising in most of our competitor countries. In this period the number of jobs lost through redundancy averaged 180,000 a year...

(Benn, qu.in Singh, Op.cit p113)

Benn's concern for the welfare of the national economy, and its situation viz a viz our "competitors" was echoed by other patriotic Labour spokesmen. Benn saw de-industrialisation as being caused by unpatriotic capitalists exporting capital, and by the favouring by successive Conservative governments of financial and commercial sections of the bourgeoisie; by the subordination of industry to "City interests". Although the bourgeoisie shared some of Benn's concerns, they were unable to throw their weight behind him, due to his enthusiasm for nationalisation and opposition to wage controls. Despite its anti-industrial bias, the Conservative party remains favoured by the CBI, because of its successes in controlling the class, as Labour was unable to do 1974-9, and for its attempts to reduce the "tax burden" on capital. A siege economy, as favoured by Benn, with import controls, control of capital exports, and devaluation, would, as yet, be too perilous for capitalism to contemplate.

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The theme that Britain's ills are specific to it, and that the blame for her economic decline lies at the door of the "wicked Tories", finds echo also in the ranks of the Euro-communist scribblers of Marxism Today. According to them, the bourgeoisie has "opposed the planning necessary to halt Britain's economic decline, and this is the main reason why" government attempts to stop this decline have been so ineffectual". ("The past strikes back", Bob Rowthorn, Marxism Today, 2/82 p8). Thatcherism, he reveals, "rejects the usual left demand for import controls and a strong interventionist industrial strategy", and instead adopts policies which lead to de-industrialisation,

"Its (Thatcherism's) immediate impact is obvious. There has been a slump unprecedented in the whole of British history. In just one year between December 1979 and December 1980, manufacturing output fell by 15%. No other advanced capitalist country has experienced anything like this. Thatcherism has made things much worse in Britain." (Op.cit, p11)

For these "communists" there is nothing inevitable about the decline of capital - as long as it is subject to state capitalist measures, its recovery is assured.

According to the monetarist orthodoxy dominant in the Conservative party at the moment, "the single most important factor leading to de-industrialisation in the last decade, has been the excessive growth of public expenditure". But as we have shown many times elsewhere, the expansion of state spending is an initial response to the outbreak of crisis, not a cause of that crisis. Cutting state expenditure does not lead to the expansion of industry, but the expansion of unemployment.

SOME INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS.

Marxists don't analyse reality on the basis of short cycles, but on the basis of long term trends, which iron out accidents and fluctuations. Neither do they base their analysis on the

evidence of specific countries, but on that from the world economy. Turning from the experience of Britain, to that of other advanced capitalist countries, further difficulties with the theory of de-industrialisation are met. According to tertiarisation theory, the increase in industrial productivity and "demand" for services, combine to produce a "post-industrial" economy. Thus we will expect countries whose growth rates in productivity have been highest, to have led the march to this take away Utopia. In fact, it is precisely those countries where productivity increases have been highest, and where incomes have been less hard hit since the crisis, where tertiarisation is least (Japan, W.Germany, France, Italy). The countries which have fared worst in increasing productivity, where incomes have fallen, and where import penetration is highest, are those which have developed a swollen tertiary sector. Thus, tertiarisation is the price of economic failure, not a consequence of economic success. In Britain from 1974-9, the index of productivity in manufacturing rose by 1% a year, and in the USA by 3%. Meanwhile in Japan it rose by 6% and in France and West Germany by 5%. (Figures given in Rowthorn, p10). The following table makes this point clearer,

PROPORTIONS OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.
(1950-75; percentages.)

	1950	60	70	75
U.K.	35	36	35	31
Belgium	33	34	33	30
France	n.a.	28	28	28
Germany	n.a.	35	37	36
Italy	n.a.	27	32	33
Japan	n.a.	31	37	36
USA	34	34	32	29

(Source; "De-Industrialisation; a background paper", Brown and Sherriff, in Blackaby, Op.Cit p237).

Thus, industrial employment, as a share of total employment was generally stable or growing in the capitalist metropolises till 1970, with the exception of the USA, where it registered a

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slight fall. Since then the most competitive countries have maintained their employment share in manufacturing, the less competitive have suffered a slight fall, and the least competitive, (UK and USA) a much larger one - once again it is clear that what we are seeing is an effect of the crisis, and not any long term trend independent of crises. The world economic crisis has led to a massive depression, which has hit certain countries harder, and given an appearance of de-industrialisation, when in reality industrial employment is bearing the brunt of the crisis.

THE WORKING CLASS ON A WORLD SCALE.
Before the present crisis gave some pseudo evidence for the tertiarisation theorists, the position of the working class was subject to an empirical study of massive proportions by Simon Rubak, largely based on I.L.O. statistics.(1). Though without any theoretical weight, the work is of enormous empirical value since it studies the position of the working class in almost every country during this century. His conclusions refute the idea that there has been any absolute or relative decline in the position of the working class on a world scale.

There were about 50 million industrial workers in the world in 1911, mainly in Europe and the USA. By 1950 this had risen to 163 millions, and by 1960 to around 210 millions. (Rubak, p80). The absolute growth of the proletariat world wide is indisputable. Some of the growth rates are staggering. In the USA the number of industrial workers grew from 18 millions in 1930 to 31 millions in 1969, a growth of 70%. In Spain in the same period, the growth was 410%, in Japan 210%, Sweden 187%, all rates which far outstripped the growth rate for population. On a world scale as well, population increased by about 300% from 1914, which is less than the increase (about 400%) in the industrial labour force. Relative to total population the working class is not decreasing, either in the metropolises, or on a world scale.

(1) "La Classe Ouvriere est en Expansion Permanente" (Spartakus, Paris) 1972.

thus be of those of S.A. citizenship).

SOME COUNTRIES OF THE SEMI DEVELOPED PERIPHERY: SECTORIAL POPULATION FIGS.

	Agric.	Ind.	Serv.
Brazil(1965)	54	13	33
(1981)	33	24	43
Korea (1965)	66	9	25
(S.) (1981)	32	26	37
India (1965)	74	11	15
(1981)	64	18	18
S,Afr.(1965)	24	22	18
(1981)	17	26	21
Philipi(1965)	61	15	24
penes. (1981)	48	21	31.

(Source; World View(Pluto Press) 1983).

In the countries of the semi developed periphery, the industrial sector has tended to grow faster than that of services. In the state capitalist countries, however, they have both grown at roughly the same rate at the expense of agriculture.

SECTORIAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN SELECTED E. EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

	Agric.	Ind.	Serv.
USSR(1965)	40	32	28
(1981)	20	40	40
GDR.(1965)	15	49*	36
(1981)	10	51	39
Yug-(1965)	63	18	19
'via(1981)	31	33	36

(Source; As previous table.)

These developments do not mean a replacement of the capitalist metropolises as the centres of revolutionary possibility, by the periphery or the eastern bloc countries. Rather they mean an extension on a global scale of the geographical area which may initiate or sustain a revolutionary working class movement. Despite its wish to make the proletariat disappear, capitalism is more imperilled by it, on a world scale, than ever before.

(2) See "Draft Theses on Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Periphery", in Communist Review No. 3.

*Includes construction in the GDR. Also this fig. is a world record percentage

When we look at the industrial proletariat in relation to the active labour force (ie, those at work), the picture is a little more complex. There has been an enormous growth in the size of the labour force, relative to population, in the capitalist metropolises this century, largely due to the increased participation of women in the labour force. Thus Britain, with a population of around 45 millions in 1914, had a labour force of 15 million. Today, with a population of 55 million the labour force has increased to 25 millions. That is, the active population has risen from about 33% to about 45%. Thus it would be quite possible for the industrial proletariat to be increasing absolutely, and even as a proportion of TOTAL population, while decreasing as a proportion of the ACTIVE population; this in a nutshell is the core of most tertiarisation arguments. Certainly on a world scale there was little evidence for this before the onset of the crisis.

SECTORIAL GROWTH OF THE ACTIVE WORLD POPULATION. 1950-60 (in millions.)

	Total	Agric.	Ind.	Serv.
1950	1138	692(60%)	190(18%)	248(22%)
1960	1296	745(57%)	251(20%)	299(23%)

(Source; Rubak, Op.Cit p132).

In absolute terms, the industrial sector grew by 53 millions, while that of services grew by 51 millions.

THE SEMI DEVELOPED PERIPHERY.

We saw above the situation in the heartlands of capitalism, with relation to "de-industrialisation". What of the semi-developed periphery, where we have argued that revolutionary outbreaks are possible?(2). As we showed in Workers Voice No 22, in the text "Multi-Nationals and the Crisis", capital reacted to the onset of the crisis by shifting certain aspects of its productive capacity to the semi-developed periphery. The effects of this can be seen in the following table. (Note the case of S.Africa, whose figures do not round to 100%; we can only suggest that this is because the S.A. government excludes migrant labour. The figs, would

The Little Big Horn of the tertiarisation arguments, their last stand, is the composition of the industrial labour force itself. It might be conceded that the industrial labour force was growing absolutely until the onset of the crisis; it may even be admitted that in relation to active and total population it may have held its own. But it will be argued that a structural change has taken place in industrial employment itself; that industry now employs more engineers, technicians and white collar workers, and less manual workers than before.

It is true that in percentage terms, these groups are expanding faster than so-called manual workers. In France from 1962-8 the number of engineers increased by 38%, of technicians by over 50%, and workers by less than 10%. But when we look at the absolute figures, a rather different picture emerges:

EVOLUTION OF THREE SOCIO PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES IN FRANCE.

	1962	1968	Inc.
Engineers	138,000	190,000	52,000
Technicians	344,000	534,000	190,000
Workers	7,060,000	7698,000	638,000

(Source, Rubak, Op.Cit. p84).

Thus, not only were three new workers created for every engineer and technician combined, but the gap in absolute terms between the workers and other strata actually widened. (Incidentally here we should point out that most technicians are actually productive proletarians anyway).

A nineteenth century factory was generally quite small, and the capitalist was often his own accountant, engineer and manager (although a high proportion of the labour force was unproductively employed as foremen and overseers, often one in ten.). Around the turn of the century the capitalists took in their own office staff to deal with the increasing complexities of mass production. In the twentieth century this has been extended to tech-

nical and scientific staff, marketing and so on. This has led to a relative decline of the directly and ancillary productive workers in the labour force - from about four fifths, to about two thirds.

According to Bravermann, there were 35 nonproduction workers for every 100 production workers in the USA in 1961. Over the century this had evolved as follows:

	Admin.	Production	Ratio. %
1899	348	4,496	7.7
1909	750	6,256	12.0
1923	1,280	8,87	15.6
1929	1,496	8,361	17.9
1937	1,518	8,553	17.7
1947	2,578	11,916	21.6

(source; Bravermann Labour and Monopoly Capital, 1974 p.240. Figs. in 000s.)

or to put it another way, there were about 4 million more workers than administrators in US industry at the turn of the century; by 1947 there were 9½ million more. Remember too, that the figs. put foremen in production, and technicians in administration, so they overstate the drift towards administration. So there is little here to support the theories of a decline in manual work, or the emergence of a "new working class", as foreseen by star gazers like Serge Mallet ("La Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière"). Even when we look at the labour force in the supposed "sunrise" industries, we find a structure in the labour force not too dissimilar from the traditional smokestack industries;

COMPOSITION OF THE WORKFORCE IN SILICON VALLEY, RELATIVE TO CLASS COMPOSITION.

Category	% of employment	class
General production	50	
Specialist production	15	50+15=65% productive proletarians.
Clerical workers	15	=80% proletarians.
Engineers and Managers	20	bourgeois and petty-bourg.

(These figures come from "General Tendencies of Class Composition", in *Prometeo*, 8, p14.).

THE CASE OF THE USA.

The country which is usually used to argue the case for de-industrialisation is the USA. Here there has been a slow decline in the proportion of the active population engaged in manufacturing. Estimates of this vary; earlier we gave (p.7) that of from 34% in 1950, to 29% in 1975. Another estimate (*World View*, Op.Cit, p277) gives from 33% in 1965, to 27% in 1981; nevertheless the "decline" is clear. However, these figures should be put in context. In the first place they conceal an enormous absolute increase in the number of industrial workers. Rubak (p.25) estimates this at from 10½ million in 1910, to 31 million in 1969 - there are more industrial workers in the USA than in any other country. And as a percentage of the total population, the industrial labour force has hardly changed; from 13.4% in 1965 it has gone to 12.8% in 1981. What has happened?

The service sector in the USA has always been larger than in the other capitalist countries, since it services, not only domestic US capital, but the interests of US imperialism worldwide. The US banks and industrial companies have worldwide interests, but their headquarters, and all the parasitic services appertaining, in the USA. The vast quantity of US manufacturing carried on outside its borders (see here "Multinationals and the Crisis" in *WV*. 22), distorts the picture on a national basis.

But this is only part of the story. Since the early 1960s, while manufacturing industry has expanded slowly, there has been a faster absolute and relative growth of the service sector. There exists the paradox of rising unemployment, and an expansion of the labour force at the same time. Rising male unemployment and static industrial wages, have led to the increase of female and child labour in the USA, in low-paid, part time jobs, as working-class families struggle to maintain their living standards.

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Capitalism is exploiting the auto worker, so that it can employ his wife (and the wife of the unemployed auto worker next door), as a typist, his daughter selling hamburgers, and his son delivering laundry, to add a modern twist to the example of the use of machinery by capitalism, cited earlier (p.5) by Marx. Even if all these work only part time, they count as a "person in employment". Hence we have only 25% of the population engaged in industry, and the "disappearance of the working class".

But why is capitalism, in certain countries, able to expand employment in the tertiary sector during an economic crisis? As Marxists, we know that the sector is parasitic, appropriating revenue from productive capital, and further lowering the rate of profit. It would thus seem logical, as the spokesmen for the industrial bourgeoisie demand, to cut down on the service sector. But private capitalism doesn't make decisions in the national interest, but in the pursuit of immediate profits. If it is more profitable to invest in banks, or in the provision of luxury services, or in hamburger stalls, then that is where investment will go, since the rate of (parasitic) profit is higher there. It is the low rate of industrial profit, which drives capital into speculative and parasitic tertiary activity. In the state capitalist countries, where, within limits, the distribution of surplus value is a state decision, the trend can be minimised. But even in the "mixed" economies, the expansion of tertiary employment has objective limits.

The service sector expanded in the last world capitalist crisis of the 1930s, when for example, domestic service had a revival. This fell back again as imperialist war provided the ground for capitalist economic recovery. Were this a normal cycle of accumulation economic upswing would lead to a renewed demand for industrial labour, and force up the price of service labour. As industrial investment became more profitable, it would attract capital, and the balance between

industrial and service sectors would be altered. But today capitalism cannot overcome its crisis by "normal" means, and only war or revolution are the alternatives. Since the crisis will continue until either of these alternatives, what will be the fate of the service sector in the meantime?

Even without government intervention, the very reasons which lead to an expansion of the service sector, also lead to an end to this expansion. The parasitic appropriation of surplus value from productive capital has as a limit the profitability of that capital itself. Financial (banks, insurance) and technical (consultancy, advertising etc.) services can take the lions share of industrial profits up to a point, but not definitely without threatening the hand which feeds them. Advertising agencies make super profits as competition intensifies, and banks do the same as firms borrow to finance investment, but such parasitic appropriation has its limits. In the USA banking employment rose dramatically to a peak in 1976, then levelled; the financial problems of American banking in the last decade make our point for us.

In the service sectors similar forces are at work. Given the enormous rise in staff in the social security system (to cope with unemployment), it is now economical to computerise it, and lay off staff, which was not so before. As far as the technical capacity to rationalise certain parts of the tertiary sector goes, capitalism has it. According to the bourgeois economist Leontieff, of the Institute of Economic Analysis at New York University,

"...the changing structure of the labour force will not be dominated by a decline in production workers, who will probably increase their share of jobs. But there will be a dramatic fall in the number of office workers, as office automation gathers pace. Their share of the labour force will decline from 17.8% to 11.4%. The potential for office auto-

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mation is enormous. At present the average American office worker uses only \$2,000 of capital equipment, compared with \$25,000 for a factory worker." (Guardian 7.2.85. p23)

The theory of tertiarisation is an attack on the working class, which tries to deny that it is any longer the agent of historical change. The theory is false. Until the advent of the economic crisis, the proportion of the labour force employed in manufacturing in the metropolises was either static or increasing in most countries. The expansion of the service sector is largely a result of the economic crisis, and has definite objective limits. The following table makes this clear.

CHANGES IN UK EMPLOYMENT 1966-81.

	66-74	74-79	79-81
Manufac- turing.	-713	-695	-1,000
Non-manu- facturing.	+250	+825	+596

(Source: Rowthorn, Op.Cit. p.9
Figs in 000s.)

Since the analyses of these intellectual dwarfs is wrong their conclusions are worthless. Whether it is Gorz advising us to turn to marginalist politics, or Hobsbawm saying that a new classless populist reformism has to be forged, we reject them with contempt. Let us turn instead to the consideration of serious political issues.

CLASS COMPOSITION AND SERVICE SECTOR.

Unfortunately for those who like scripturalist certainties, as a substitute for a materialist method, neither Marx, nor Engels for that matter, anywhere provided a definition of class. At specific points in their work various groups and strata are described as belonging to a specific class, without the analysis of why this is so being made explicit. One of the great ironies of Marxism is

that the manuscript of Volume 3 of Capital breaks off with exactly the following words,

"The owners of mere labour power, the owners of capital, and the landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and rent of land, in other words, wage labourers, capitalists and landowners, form the three great classes of modern society based on the capitalist mode of production. The economic structure of society is indisputably most highly and classically developed in England. But even here the class structure does not appear in a pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere.

We have seen that the continual tendency of capitalist production, is to divorce more and more the means of production from labour.. thereby transforming labour into wage labour..

The first question to be answered is-what constitutes a class? The answer can be found by answering another question; what constitutes wage labourers, capitalists and landlords as the three great social classes? At first sight it might seem that identity of revenues and of sources of revenues is responsible. The classes are three great social groups whose components, the individual members, live from wages, profit and rent respectively, that is from the utilisation of their labour power, capital and landed property. However, from this point of view doctors and officials would also form two distinct classes, since they belong to two different social groups, and the revenues of the members of each group come from the same source. The same would be true also of the infinite distinctions of interest and position which the

social division of labour creates among workers, as among capitalists and landowners; in the latter case for instance, between the owners of vineyards, farms, forests, mines and fisheries..."

(Here the manuscript breaks off.)

(Capital Vol 111, p885-6.)

While Marx here talks of the three great social classes, and admits the existence of intermediate strata, no criterion for class membership is given. Given our present tasks two points he makes are vital. The first is that different sources of revenue do not make different class; thus the fact that productive workers are paid from capital and non productive from revenue, is not in itself a definitive criterion for saying that they are different classes.

The second point is that which is the whole thrust of the analysis of Capital, the divorce of labour from the means of production. For Marx, the crucial issue is relationship to the means of production. Objectively, a proletarian is a wage labourer, who may or may not be productive for capital, but who is divorced from ownership of capital. As our comrades in the International Bureau have said,

"All waged workers whose work assumes the forms of factory production, i.e. alienated, parcelled and rationalised labour, all these can be said to belong to the working class."

("General Tendencies.." in Prometeo, Op. Cit p12.)(4).

(4) Though we have to disagree with their analysis, when they accept too easily the views that the industrial proletariat is decreasing, eg, "It is an empirical fact recognised by everybody, that the occupations in the sector of production and transportation of goods are now in diminution in the capitalist citadels"(p.9). As we have shown this is not the case, either absolutely, or in most cases, relatively either.

For Marxism, the idea of a service, or tertiary sector, is a bourgeois one; it implies that its labour force is unproductive. But many workers in this sector are not only proletarians, but surplus value producing proletarians. This is true for the whole range of transport industries such as railways, road haulage and shipping. Marx is explicit that the labour involved in bringing a commodity to market is productive labour, whereas the physical process of sale is unproductive, a cost of production,

"The productive capital invested in (the transport industry) imparts value to the transported products, partly by transferring value from the means of transportation, partly by adding value from the labour involved in transport."
(Capital, Vol.11 p.150).

This also goes for the utility industries (electricity, gas, water) whose physical product is used for the reproduction of labour power, and for the cycle of production itself. The labour here expended corresponds to Marx's definition of productive labour as surplus value producing labour, whose product is incorporated in a new cycle of production. Thus the vast majority of the above two sectors, amounting to about 10% of the population in the metropolises, are productive workers.

This does not mean that the rest of the tertiary sector is not working class. The equation of productive worker with proletarian is an arbitrary one, which finds no place in Marx's work. Certainly it can be argued, and we do so, that the productive section of the working class will have a specific weight in any revolutionary upheaval. But to argue that they are the only proletarians is a non-sequitur of staggering proportions. An example of this kind of thinking is the academic marxicologist Poulanzas, whose Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, is the clearest example of such an ouvrierist vulgarisation. Poulanzas asserts that only manual, productive workers are prol-

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etarians, since only they produce surplus value. The rest of society, apart from the bourgeoisie, are lumped together as "petty-bourgeois", including the entire tertiary sector, and a large part of the industrial labour force as well. He argues thus,

"Although every worker is a wage earner, not every wage earner is a worker, for not every wage earner is engaged in productive labour...productive labour in the capitalist mode of production is that labour which produces surplus value, while directly reproducing the material elements that serve as the substratum of the relations of exploitation; labour that is directly involved in material production, by producing use values which increase material wealth"
(Classes... p20).

Leaving aside that his class analysis is nothing but an assertion, there are so many errors here it approaches genius. The basic confusion is to confuse productive labour with the production of material commodities, nay use values! It was precisely this error that Marx long ago demolished, by pointing out that some productive labour produces no object(transport), while the production of certain commodities under capitalism(those of the petty bourgeoisie) is unproductive,

"only bourgeois thick headedness, which regards the capitalist forms of production as absolute forms-hence as eternal, natural forms of production, can confuse the question of what is productive labour from the standpoint of capital, with the question of what is productive labour in general, and consequently fancy itself very wise in giving the answer that all labour which produces anything at all, which has any kind of result, is "eo ipso" productive labour."

(Theories of Surplus Value, p178)

Poulanzas would also include in his class of productive workers arms and luxury goods workers, since they produce a physical object for sale. But for Marxists the labour of such workers is unproductive for capital as a whole, though it produces a profit for their own employers. Similarly, he would exclude from the working class groups like draughtsmen and technicians in industry on the grounds of status, authority and other impressionistic criteria. But in Marxist terms they are productive workers in a way, for example, that clerical and sales workers are not. All white collar and non productive workers he lumps with the traditional petty-bourgeoisie, on the grounds of their status and self-image. One might as well call them slaves or serfs, so unscientific is Poulanzas' argument. Marx on the other hand was quite explicit as to what the petty-bourgeoisie was, ie small property owners who did NOT live by the sale of their labour-power. In the Communist Manifesto, he talks of "the lower strata of the middle class-the small tradesmen, shopkeepers..the handicraftsmen and peasants.." (Sel Wks. Vol 1 p.41), and it is unscientific to use the term otherwise.

Although Marx does not equate productive workers with the working class, his definition of what constituted productive labour was wider than labour limited to immediate production,

"As the co-operative character of the labour process becomes more and more marked, so, as a necessary consequence, does our notion of productive labour, and of its agent, the productive labourer become extended. In order to labour productively it is no longer necessary for you to do manual work yourself; enough that you are an organ of the collective laborer, and perform one of its subordinate functions."

(Capital, Vol.1 p476.)

Poulanzas' exclusion of ancillary industrial workers from the working class

clearly violates Marx's conception here and draughtsmen, quality controllers, machine setters, fork lift drivers and lavatory cleaners in an engineering works are all as proletarian as the man on the machine tool.

The idea that, transport and utilities conceded, the rest of the tertiary sector is unproductive, also needs examination; and remember here we are not talking about productive of a profit for the immediate employer, but of surplus-value for capitalism as a whole. And there is much "hidden" productive labour in the service sector. Laundering and maintenance are productive if they maintain the material components of production, unproductive if they do not do so. Thus laundering workers' overalls is productive for capital, laundering tuxedos is not; maintaining a fleet of delivery vehicles is productive, maintaining a fleet of limousines is not. Indeed, the same worker can be productive or unproductive, carrying out the same task (eg. changing spark plugs)-"the same kind of labour may be productive or unproductive" (Marx). It is interesting that US statistics used to include laundry workers, and garage workers (the latter a huge sector) in production industry, but switched them to services after WW1.

Education is another part of the tertiary sector where at least some of the labour performed is productive labour. In so far as they are necessary for the reproduction of labour power, "costs of training must also be included among the elements of value expended for the production of labour power." (Capital, Vol.1.p139). Thus training in basic literacy and numeracy, and vocational training, are productive for capital-training in Greek and Sociology are not productive. Productive labour turns up in surprising areas. Marx himself gave the example of hiring a paper-hanger, at first sight a "service",

"If I have my house re-papered, and the paper hangers are wage workers of a master who sells me the job, it is just the same for

me as if I had bought a house ready papered; as if I have expended money for a commodity for my consumption. But for the master who gets these labourers to hang the paper, they are productive labourers, for they produce surplus value for him."

(Theories of Surplus Value, p393).

The suppression of the traditional petty bourgeois distributive sector, has led to the emergence of large retail chains, where much hidden productive labour is done. Many workers in supermarkets (butchers, bakers) do work formerly done in factories. If a worker is a wage labourer, it matters not one iota for capital, if he bones meat or bakes bread in a factory or a "shop"; he is a surplus value producing proletarian.

Only superficial analysts can dispute that the tertiary sector contains large numbers of productive workers. The second illusion about this sector, is that it contains largely "white collar" as opposed to "manual" work. This is not so; huge armies of low skill, low paid manual workers toil therein. Janitors, cooks, cleaners in public or private establishments, not to mention dustmen and other council manual workers, all of whom are indisputably working class, are found there, as are domestic "service" workers, such as plumbers, electricians etc, working for small firms. Nevertheless, a very large part of the service sector does consist of "white collar" work. Here we need a digression on the nature of mental and manual work.

Bourgeois social science regards manual work as that performed with a tool, and mental work as that performed with the brain. Clearly any such division is a little arbitrary, since a navvy will use some brain work along with his pick, and a surgeon will use "tools" along with his medical knowledge. But the real problem, is that for bourgeois social science, the work of the nuclear physicist is put in the same category as that of the clerk, as mental labour, while that of, say, a

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skilled tradesman such as an electrician, is defined as "manual". But the latter's labour, as with many other manual workers, contains far more brain work, than that of a clerk. Whatever bourgeois social science says, or whatever illusion such groups have as to their status, most clerks, shopkeepers and so forth, are simply routine, low grade manual labourers. We don't judge class position by status or self image which are impressionistic and subjective. Marx himself analysed the position of the "commercial proletariat" (though the phrase is Engels'),

"In one respect such a commercial employee is a wage worker like any other. In the first place, his labour power is bought with the variable capital of the merchant...for the purpose of expanding the capital advanced for it....

Just as the labourer's unpaid labour directly creates surplus-value for productive capital, so the unpaid labour of the commercial wage worker secures a share of this surplus value for merchant's capital."

(Capital, Vol. 111, p292,4.)

Any residual status such groups had is vanishing due to the "industrialisation" of their conditions of work, and erosion of living standards, which in most cases now fall below those of manual workers. For an extended discussion of these groups of the working class, we enthusiastically recommend the work by Bravemann, Labour and Monopoly Capital. He demonstrates that the extension of the tertiary sector is the extension of poverty and degradation of working conditions. Far from being a new petty bourgeoisie, such strata are nearer to being a new sub-proletariat.

This is not to say that all strata are equally important for communist work. Illusions about classlessness, the fragmented nature of the work process, and lack of economic muscle can all limit the power of certain groups of workers in struggle, and hence their potential class consciousness. It does

not alter their objective class status. If we may be permitted to quote Marx again,

"It is indeed the characteristic of the capitalist mode of production that it separates the various kinds of labour from each other, therefore also mental and manual labour..and distributes them among different people. This does not however prevent the material product from being the common product of these persons..and more than on the other hand it prevents or in any way alters the relation of each of these persons to capital being that of a wage labourer."

(Theories of Surplus Value, Vol. 1, p411-2.)

Many groups in the tertiary sector are petty-bourgeois or bourgeois. The most obvious is the residual element of the traditional petty bourgeoisie, such as farmers, and fishermen who own their own means of production, shopkeepers, and artisanal services (eg. independent tradesmen like plumbers.) But even here we must be cautious, and avoid formalism. It is true that not all "wage" workers are proletarian: but neither are all proletarians wage workers, despite Poulanzas' claims. The capitalist crisis has forced employers to look for ways of cheapening their overheads, and the system of pseudo self employment, once confined to the building industry ("the lump"), is now assuming a generalised form. The legal fiction of self employment allows the capitalist to reap huge rewards. He avoids employment protection laws, national insurance payments, sick pay, redundancy agreements, pensions schemes and minimum wage legislation. From high paid workers in the North Sea, to low paid cinema attendants, this form of pseudo self-employment is spreading. But the workers remain proletarians.

In a similar position to the traditional petty bourgeoisie are, however,

the "new" petty bourgeoisie of the so-called professions, amounting to as much as 10% of the population in the metropolises. These are only superficially a unified group, unified by a certain intellectual (usually University) training. In many cases their intellectual capital is able to function as money capital. Certain professions (architects, doctors, lawyers and accountants) are petty bourgeois, since they run a business, and hire labour to carry it on for a personal profit. Even though their income may take the form of a wage, it is simply the disguised profit from enterprise. The upper reaches of these strata shade into the bourgeoisie proper, since quantity becomes quality, and a certain part of their income functions as investment and speculative capital. Managers, judges, higher civil servants are in a similar position, since again their income is enough to allow a major part to function as capital. Despite their pseudo-salaried status, these groups are members of the bourgeoisie.

The lower professional groups, like teachers and social workers, are in a different category. They are wage-labourers, whose income is not enough to function as capital, and whose intellectual "capital" does not provide the basis for entrepreneurial activity, as with lawyers, architects and so forth. By education and (aspirant) life-style petty bourgeois, their social and economic situation is proletarian. Nature allows hybrid cases, and this would appear to be one in society. The social frustrations attendant on this contradiction possibly explains why these two areas provide the bulk of recruits for leftism. Marx, interestingly, considered the teacher as a proletarian,

"That labourer alone is productive who produces surplus-value for the capitalist... If we may take an example from outside the sphere of material production, a schoolmaster is a productive labourer when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works

like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, does not alter the relation."

(Capital, Vol. 1, p477.)

PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

This text aims to be very much a foray into uncharted territory, rather than a set of definitive conclusions and prescriptions for action. This is inevitable. Aside from some very un-theoretical works of bourgeois economics, and some impressionistic leftist and marginalist tracts, there has been very little work done on the themes of tertiarisation and class composition. Aside from the Prometeo text by our comrades of the Internationalist Communist Party (P.C.Int.) cited earlier, we are aware of nothing produced by any of the groups claiming to be within the tradition of the communist left, on the themes of this article.

Marxism is not empiricism; it doesn't let facts "speak for themselves". But neither is it a set of abstractions and generalisations, disconnected from reality. It is rather, the interpretation of material reality, in the light of a scientific world view. We hope in the first part of this text, to have provided an interpretation of employment trends that demolishes the theories of the "disappearance of the working class".

Marxists don't accept what people think about themselves as being scientific; neither do they believe that the Registrar General has found the philosophers stone which allows him to infallibly analyse social classes. Again, a Marxist method allows us to refute ideas of a "new middle class", or even a "new working class", which is somehow of higher skill and status, and to show that the majority of workers in the tertiary sector are working class. Therefore, their efforts to fight

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their bosses, and to organise themselves, now and in any revolutionary upheaval, should be encouraged. Class boundaries are not being blurred in advanced capitalist societies, and Marx's view remains the reality,

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital... grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself"

(Capital, Vol.1 p715.)

PUBLICATIONS OF RELATED INTEREST.

A fuller understanding of the economic ideas underlying the above text, can be got from the articles:

ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF CAPITALIST
DECADENCE
and
MONEY, CREDIT AND CRISIS.

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The question of class consciousness is dealt with in the text:

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MARXIST
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The text from COMMUNIST REVIEW, cited on page 8, is also available at £1.25.

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CWO INTRODUCTION TO KRONSTADT TEXT

March 1986 marks the 65th anniversary of the Kronstadt uprising in Russia. To mark this occasion, we are publishing a text, first issued five years ago, in *Prometeo*, the theoretical journal of the Internationalist Communist Party (P.C.Int.), who along with the C.W.O. are constituent members of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (I.B.R.P.).

We are publishing the text for two main reasons. In the first place, the events of Kronstadt have served many tendencies with "proofs" of their analyses of the Russian Revolution, and of wider issues of revolutionary politics. On the one hand we have the Stalinists and the Trotskyists, including Trotsky himself, who have argued that the events in Kronstadt were nothing but a counter-revolutionary plot, and the actions of the Bolshevik Party in crushing the revolt an example of its historical birthright in action. Not far from these tendencies have been the Bordighist currents, unwilling to admit to any deformations in Lenin's Russia, and for whom too the events only have negative significance.

On the other hand there have been the eulogisers of Kronstadt, from the anarchist Ida Mett onwards. They have argued that the events at Kronstadt were the pure spirit of revolutionary Russia, against the perverted power-mania of the Bolsheviks, and were potentially the beginnings of a real revolutionary movement. To the voices of the anarchists have been added those of sundry libertarians, councillists and other confusionists in a veritable Babel of confusion. The greatest strength of this text is its demonstration that neither of these simplistic analyses are correct. Kronstadt, while un-

doubtedly a genuine proletarian movement in reaction to the degeneration of proletarian power, was simultaneously an expression of the defeat of the revolution, both in Russia and internationally. This was reflected both in its programme and in its political leadership, whether opportunist or counter-revolutionary.

The second reason we are publishing the text is as a further contribution to our ongoing debate on the degeneration of the Russian revolution, its causes, and its lessons, especially for the party-class-state debate. Our readers will recall that this was initiated in R.P.20 ("The Debate on Method and the Degeneration of the Russian Revolution"). We are publishing this present text as a contribution to carrying this debate forward, while cautioning that it carries neither the programmatic seal of the PCInt., nor of the CWO; it was published in its original form in *Prometeo* as a signed text, a contribution to discussion, and as such it is published again here. This second aspect of the text is not as fully developed as is the first, on the events of Kronstadt themselves, since it was intended to initiate a discussion, not provide a definitive statement of a programmatic nature. As such we are offering it to our readers, with the invitation to participate in the debate with our organisation on the fundamental political problems it raises.

In the longer term all such debates as this one will contribute to a reformulation of our organisation's position on the question on the lessons of the Bolshevik experience.

The Editor, R.P.

KRONSTADT 1921 : AN ANALYSIS OF A POPULAR UPRISING IN RUSSIA IN THE TIME OF LENIN.

This year is the 60th. anniversary of the Kronstadt revolt, which took place in March 1921. We are not amongst those who are celebrating the "myth" of Kronstadt, but neither do we undervalue the deep significance of the revolt. As with other issues, we have a clear position on this question, which does not merely interest us as an historical or cultural problem. On the contrary, it is an opportunity for us to deal once again with important topical problems: problems which must concern all revolutionaries involved in the enormous and urgent task of reconstructing the party of the class.

The class party is not born out of confusion. Confusion only produces further confusion, and inevitable defeat for the working class. What the class needs is a political programme and a strategy which eliminates the un-Marxist dross which has accumulated and polluted revolutionary Marxism over the years.

So, what is the point of re-examining Kronstadt today? First of all it concerns the famous transition period. That is, the problems revolutionaries face after the defeat of the bourgeoisie when, step by step, society and the economy will undergo a socialist transformation. At the same time the "semi-state" is destined to disappear as classes themselves disappear with the passage of time.

It is also significant for understanding the relationship which must lie between the state, as the synthesis of the maximum centralisation of workers' power, and the specific forms of the proletarian dictatorship (the soviets) as instances of the exercise of the same power of the class at a particular local level. (The two are dialectically linked. Soviet power is realised by means of rigorous political centralisation in the workers' state; the workers' state is the expression of the soviets, but controls them by meeting the wishes of the base, in the framework of a reciprocal relationship based on democratic centralism and in harmony with society's general interests.)

But above all it is significant for understanding the thorny problem of the party-class, party-soviet and finally party-workers' state relationship. What will be the role of the party which has brought the proletariat to victory, after the seizure of power? The replies from the various revolutionary organisations contradict each other. Dictatorship of the class? Dictatorship of the Party as the direct expression of the genuine will of the class? Maybe it is the state, in so far as it is accountable to the party, or vice-versa, is it the party which must be identified with the state and the organs of revolutionary management?

We can list an endless series of problems, all of which are subsumed in the process which culminated with the rebellion of the Kronstadt sailors. By analysing the facts of the situation, we can give an exhaustive reply which confirms the complex organic unity of positions which are the historic legacy of the theory elaborated by the Italian left communists. It also enables us though this is less interesting-to give an exhaustive reply to those who accuse us of embarrassment, reticence, or self proclaimed Leninist authoritarianism when faced with the question of Kronstadt.

No other historical event has been discussed by revolutionaries as much as Kronstadt. It has produced deep divisions in the international workers' movement. The complexity of the problem cannot be reduced to the idealist level of good or bad, concepts which lie outside of the framework for posing the question.

Thus Kronstadt has come to symbolise different positions-that of a pure revolutionary (though such a thing has yet to be seen), as opposed to the authoritarianism supposedly more or less congenital to Leninism. Or in contrast to this, Kronstadt is seen by others as the symbol of the counter-revolution (not even this is true), opposed to the movement towards socialism, which was trying to overcome a grave crisis, in the middle of mounting difficulties. Reality is much more complex and therefore we have to examine the objective situation in Russia during the upheavals of the civil war and the period of "war communism", and during the normalisation period, which culminated in the New Economic Policy (NEP).

THE END OF WAR COMMUNISM.

In the autumn of 1920 the civil war in Russia ended with the defeat of the last of the White generals, Wrangel. The Bolsheviks had won a mighty trial of strength which left them in control of the core of the immense territory of Russia. However, in that very period, hope for an extension of the revolution internationally began to die. The ex-

perience of revolution had been initiated with October, and continued with bitter class movements in various European countries such as Italy, Germany Hungary etc.

The Russian Revolution, already dramatically isolated, and completely encircled by boycotting capitalist powers, experienced a long period of civil war which prevented it from developing the productive forces. The first steps in the socialist transformation programme began under the weight of an unprecedented economic crisis. Although it had won on the military level, Soviet Russia was really on the brink of economic collapse. The scars of the civil war against the White Guards were visible throughout the country. The damage resulted in serious famine and epidemics greatly increasing the millions of dead which had accumulated in the course of the fighting. At the same time agricultural production had drastically diminished, while industry and transport were more shattered and disrupted than ever.

The end of the civil war also brought the problem of ending the so-called "war communism" policy, which had been an emergency programme implemented by the Bolsheviks when confronted with the civil war. Imposed as a result of economic and military necessity, it marked the extreme centralisation of government control over all aspects of social life and brought with it the full weight of the harshest of discipline imposed by militarisation and repression. Its most characteristic feature was the system of forced requisitions of grain, horses etc, from the peasants. In particular forced requisitioning of grain was crucial. Armed detachments were sent into the countryside to withdraw the surplus product to provide food for the cities and the Red Army of 5 million men.

The overwhelming majority of the peasants refused to accept such a system, so that a rupture with the Bolsheviks was inevitable. They pre-

ferred to boycott the government, and burnt the small surpluses they had managed to accumulate. Moreover, they began to cultivate only enough ground for their own needs. The result was that towards the end of 1920 the area under seed was only three-fifths of 1913, the last normal year before the outbreak of the imperialist world war. In 1921 total production had declined to less than half, livestock to less than two thirds, and production of flax and sugar beet to less than 10% of pre war levels.

The problem of the peasantry had existed almost since the day of the October insurrection. The Bolsheviks' attempts to push forward their socialisation programme were undermined and made difficult in a country where the proletariat was a tiny island in an ever-present sea of the peasantry. Lenin well understood the danger the new-born proletarian dictatorship faced, and thus had thought of a tactical alliance. If only to secure the support, or at least the neutrality of the peasants, he had recourse to innumerable expedients—such as the formation of the coalition government with the Left Social Revolutionaries in December 1917, to the general distribution of land initiated by the Land Decrees of October 1917 and February 1918. The latter provided for the abolition of large and medium landed properties, and imposed an equal sub-division amongst all who worked the land without employing wage labour.

It is obvious that such a programme, which in many ways was linked to that of the SR's (the party closest to the interests of the peasants), had little to do with the spirit or content of what had moved the Bolsheviks up to 1917. But they were aware of the contradictions, and justified them to themselves, on the basis of the real situation between the classes, and the difficulty of the working class holding power in a country like Russia at the beginning of the century.

Lenin himself had certainly recognised

the essentially "petty-bourgeois" content of the slogan, "The land to those who work it". He later saw the extremely dangerous content also, from the point of view of the alliance between the workers and the peasants, of the war communism programme, which could be summed up as, "Taking away the surplus is taking away from the peasants". Necessity was the only alibi the Bolsheviks could hide behind to justify their actions. But, with the end of the civil war, the policy of requisitioning was not halted immediately, because "the state of emergency had not immediately halted".

Huge peasant rebellions broke out all through rural Russia. Violent revolts took place in the province of Tambov, in the mid Volga area, in the Ukraine, in the northern Caucasus, in western Siberia. In this period, as Lenin observed, tens of thousands of soldiers were disbanded, almost half the troops in the Red Army. They returned to their villages, and re-inforced the ranks of the guerillas. In February 1921, on the eve of the Kronstadt revolt, the Cheka referred to the existence of 118 different peasant rebellions in various parts of the country (amongst them was that of Antonov, a former SR, who counted on the support of 50,000 insurgents.)

No less dramatic was the effect of war communism in the cities. Towards the end of 1920 total industrial production had fallen to around a fifth of the 1913 levels. There were also enormous difficulties in the field of food supplies and raw materials. The Baku oilfields and the Don coalfields had been reconquered, but were very badly damaged. Total coal production was only a quarter, and oil production a third, of the pre-war level. Production of cast iron was only 3%, while that of copper had stopped completely. These problems meant that factories operated on reduced hours, and there was an enormous reduction in the number of workers employed. In the consumer goods sector total production dropped to a quarter of 1913 levels.

The critical effects of the Allied blockade, which had been imposed since the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in 1918 aggravated this disastrous situation, as did the complete disorganisation of the tertiary sector, including transport.

The food crisis now extended throughout Russia. With war communism, every private dealer had been abolished, and normal market exchange between city and country had ceased to exist. The black market replaced it, and developed in such a way that it ousted official distribution channels. At the same time inflation rose to dizzy heights; one gold rouble which in 1917 was worth almost eight paper roubles, three years later was valued at 10 thousand. The real wage of a Petrograd factory worker had fallen to 8.6% of pre-war levels, and as the value of money disintegrated, workers were increasingly paid their wages in kind. There was a massive return to the countryside and for the Bolshevik Party, as the party of the working class par excellence, this process involved dangerous implications. In fact it made the Soviet power basis less solid, while increased contact between workers and peasants helped to increase the tension. The result was an increasing wave of rural movements, of industrial unrest, and of serious unrest amongst the military (this process has direct bearings on the explosion of Kronstadt in March 1921).

There were many reasons for the discontent of the working class, and this obviously poses the question, amongst others, of whether things could possibly have been otherwise. It is our belief that, even given the enormous difficulties, the options open to the Bolsheviks were not always strictly determined by the "situation of danger" constantly invoked. Although it is true that nothing could have changed the increasingly difficult objective situation, serious mistakes were still made. Were not policies of the militarisation of labour, advocated and applied by Trotsky under war communism, the result of a period of prog-

ressive degeneration? Before it was advocated as the result of human will, wasn't it already the result of a specific objective situation? An objective situation which shortly afterwards accommodated itself to the course of the NEP which was tactically justified for as long as possible.

In fact, the signs of degeneration were everywhere. The factories, which had been nationalised, not socialised, were initially under the iron control of the working class. In less than two years this control weakened and one man management, plus rigorous work discipline came to take its place. By 1920 four fifths of big firms were once again directed according to the principle of one man management; the bourgeois specialists had been restored to their posts. A new bureaucracy had begun to flourish and gave more and more executive functions to a section of the party.

The dream of the proletarian dictatorship, temporarily realised at the end of 1917, was being slowly extinguished. In its place was being installed a dictatorship which less and less respected the interests of the working class. The coercive and bureaucratic methods of capitalism were being restored and spreading though all points of the revolution-soviets and unions included. In the factories the odious methods of Taylorism were returning in order to increase efficiency and productivity. The tragedy of the Russian working class began under the watchful gaze of armed squads ready to enforce the will of the business directors and resolute in obtaining "iron discipline" (theorised as something to boast about for revolutionaries). This was the tragedy of those proletarians who had succeeded for the first time in overthrowing the power of capitalism. This situation could not fail to disturb a revolutionary like Lenin, who, in February 1921, expressed himself thus:

"We must have the courage to look in the face of harsh reality. The party is sick, the party is shaken by fever. And unless it

succeeds in quickly and radically curing its own illness, a break will occur which will have fatal consequences for the revolution."

THE REASONS FOR THE REVOLT.

The situation preceeding the Kronstadt insurrection was characterised by the abysmal gulf which existed between what had been the hopes for the revolution, and the harsh situation which was deteriorating progressively at an objective level. As a direct consequence of this came the progressive degeneration of the political, state and administrative apparatus (party, soviet organs, unions etc.) This gulf, experienced by a generation which had not absolutely lost the sense of its rights acquired during the revolution, was the essential psychological basis for the revolt.

In fact, the revolt of the Kronstadt sailors was linked to a secondary conflict. Even though, as we shall see, they were falling under the influence of counter-revolutionary ideology, the basic causes had been maturing during long years of profound disillusion. After the peace of Brest Litovsk the government began a total reorganisation of the army, based on rigid discipline: the very problem which had been at the centre of all the revolts of the sailors of the Baltic Fleet since 1905. This was considered incompatible with the principle of election of officials from the rank and file. Thus, a hierarchical order was reinstalled, annulling the revolutionary spirit which the Bolsheviks had been responsible for introducing.

In the Navy, partly because of a shortage of new recruits, a similar reorganisation proved difficult, especially at Kronstadt, where the old revolutionary traditions were still alive, and where the sailors could enjoy those gains which remained after 1917. This state of affairs led to a deep divergence between the naval base and the supreme command of the Red Army, a divergence that was to become even deeper, especially with the dissolution of the civil war fronts of European Russia. The attempts to discipline the Navy by

23. introducing Army traditions met with fierce resistance, which was shown during the preparations for the elections to the 8th. Congress of Soviets in December 1920. (What had become of Lenin's postulate that the working class would have to exercise its dictatorship by means of insurrectionary based organisations, and never on that of a permanent Army?)

On 15th February 1921, the 2nd Communist conference of the Baltic Fleet voted this severe resolution:

"The 2nd Conference of Communist Sailors thinks that the work of the Pubalt (political section of the fleet-author's note) is so neglected that it has provoked the following:

- 1) The Pubalt has cut itself off not only from the masses but also from the active officers and has transformed itself into a bureaucratic organ which no longer has the support of the sailors.
- 2) The work of the Pubalt reveals a total lack of planning and system, and, moreover, a lack of co-ordination with the centre and with the resolutions of the 9th. Congress of the Communist Party.
- 3) Because it is completely cut off from the mass of the Party, the Pubalt has suffocated every local political initiative and has transformed political work into bureaucratic red-tape with negative consequences for the mass organisations of the Party. Between June and November 20% of the Communists abandoned the Party.
- 4) The Conference maintains that the principle of organisation of the Pubalt is the determining cause of these facts, and that this principle must be changed to make it more democratic"

Clearly, there were still no obvious reasons for a breakaway. What was demanded was simply a change in the way the specialist organs of the political

sections of the fleet were run. Even so, the sailors were drawing attention to an important political factor which governed the relationship between the class and political power, between the class and its leadership role, a role which was being increasingly distorted by the organs of power which progressively substituted themselves for the class itself, producing the political aberration of an iron party dictatorship. But this was a party which was beginning to agree to actions that diverged from both the historic and immediate interests of the proletariat as a whole.

Thus, if there are not obvious signs here of a rupture, there are alarming signs of a mood which had by now become generalised. We have to remember that the document is referring to the Conference of a particular stratum of the sailors; to the communists who were more politically discerning and conscious than those outside the Party, who were directly or indirectly influenced by the Mensheviks, Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries. In spite of that, the ranks of the Communist Party were beginning to suffer the loss of many workers, sailors and peasants, and were instead being polluted by support from classes outside the revolutionary proletariat (technicians, petty-bourgeois and careerist officials.) Conversely, the document and decisions of the Party, and many of its leaders, reveal indifference towards the reasons for the great discontent of the workers, and approval of the use of methods criticised by the resolution of the sailors we have just quoted.

These signs of the mood which was running through the communists of the Baltic Fleet were being transformed into open dissent which manifested itself at elections for the 10th Party Congress where, almost unanimously, they voted against Trotsky (People's Commissar for War and the Navy) and Raskolnikov (Head of the Baltic Fleet), who were both in agreement about the militarisation of the unions. At the same time the sailors protested against the situation by abandoning the Communist Party en masse. According to the Commissar for Petrograd, 5,000 left the Party in January 1921.

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The reference to Petrograd is not an accident. An examination of the situation in the Russian capital and, more the city which lay within firing distance of Kronstadt, allows us to better understand not only the reasons for the revolt itself, but also the reasons behind its strategy. For if this strategy was to be successful, the rebellious sailors would be obliged to make contact with the working class of Petrograd, which was exceptionally worn out by the great crisis which immediately followed the war against the White Guards.

The population of Petrograd had been reduced by about two thirds. Workers who were returning to the countryside, following upon the ruin of the industrial apparatus comprised a good proportion of this reduction. The city suffered from a chronic shortage of food supplies, and thus hunger and starvation were the order of the day. The winter of 1921 was also exceptionally severe. Hundreds of people froze to death. State rations for industrial workers were limited to a piece of black bread a day; 800 grams for continuous processing industries, 600 grams for the workers of the assault groups, and 400 grams for white collar workers. The vast majority of food shops were closed, and people resorted to the black market to get something to eat.

In this dramatic situation many workers began to grumble, and they took up the classic weapon of the class struggle: the strike. The first strike broke out at the Trubochny factory on the 23rd. of February. It was extended to the Baltisky and Laferne factories, and then to a series of other workplaces. On 28th February the shop floor and dock workers at the Putilov works also joined the strike. The strikers demands called for the re-organisation of supplies, and criticised the militias whose checkpoints prevented the workers taking home what they had obtained on the black market. But alongside this economic slogan, many factories formulated political demands, such as freedom of speech and the press, and the freeing of political prisoners.

The local Party Committee and Zinoviev could find no other response to this initiative, born of desperation, than military measures,

"to defeat the enemies of the revolution who are trying, with the help of a section of the least conscious proletariat, to tear away power from the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party."

The quote is from Puchov, the official historian of the revolt, who doesn't explain who "the section of the least conscious proletariat" was, at a time when the strikers comprised the biggest concentrations of workers in Petrograd; the same workers who a short time before had unconditionally supported Bolshevik policies.

A Committee for the Defence of the Fortified Zone of Petrograd was formed, which proclaimed a state of siege, and stuck up a notice of February 24th. which read as follows:

- 1) Movement through the streets of the city is categorically forbidden after 23rd.
- 2) All meetings, gatherings, political assemblies in the open are forbidden in this locality without special permission from the Defence Committee. Persons found guilty of breaking this order will be judged with all the severity of the laws of war.

The most active strikers were arrested. The Kronstadt sailors were naturally very interested in what was going on in the capital. On Feb. 26th delegates were sent to get information about the strike, while the crew of the battle ship Petropavlovsk voted the following resolution, which would subsequently constitute the programme of the insurgents,

"Having heard the reports on the situation in Petrograd from the crew delegates of the General Assembly of the Fleet, the sailors resolve;

- 1) Since the present Soviet does not express the will of the

workers and peasants, to immediately organise new elections to the Soviet, with a secret ballot and making sure that free electoral propaganda is exercised.

- 2) To exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press for the workers and peasants, for the Anarchists and the Left Socialist Parties.

- 3) To exercise freedom of assembly and freedom for trades union and peasant organisations.

- 4) To organise, at the latest by 10th. March 1921, a conference of workers outside the Party, of the sailors and soldiers of Petrograd Kronstadt and the province of Petrograd.

- 5) To free all political prisoners from the socialist parties, and also the workers and peasants, Red soldiers and sailors belonging to the different workers and peasants movements.

- 6) To elect a commission to review the practice of detention in prisons and concentration camps.

- 7) To suppress all the Politodel (Political sections), as no party should enjoy privileges for propagandising its ideas, or receive financial aid from the state for this. Cultural groups financed by the state, must be created in their place.

- 8) To immediately suppress all checkpoints.

- 9) To give equal rations to all workers, with the sole exception of those doing unhealthy or dangerous jobs.

- 10) To suppress the armed communist detachments in the military units, and communist guards serving in the workshops and factories. If necessary, these guards should be assigned to the military units of every company, with the views of the workers being taken into account.

- 11) To give peasants complete

freedom of action on their own land and also the right to have cattle, provided they look after them themselves, and do not employ wage labour.

12) To ask all military units and the Kursanti comrades to support our resolutions.

13) To demand these resolutions be widely publicised in the press.

14) To appoint a recallable monitoring organ.

15) To authorise free handicraft production, on condition that it does not employ wage labour.

Perhaps with the exception of point 11, which is directly connected with the S.R.'s programme, this resolution is largely in the spirit as the political strategy and slogans of the Bolsheviks at the time of the seizure of power. Libertarian sentiments are perhaps an outstanding feature, but there is nothing here important which can be associated with the sort of "counter-revolutionary strategy" denounced during the rebellion by Bolshevik-controlled organs of state power.

Meanwhile the explosive effects of the revolt were beginning to be felt. The Kronstadt Soviet should have been renewed on March 2nd. On 1st. March a preliminary meeting of the 1st and 2nd. Brigades of the ships of the line was called. It was to decide the attitude to take towards these elections. 16,000 people attended the meeting, which was chaired by Communist Wassilev, president of the local Soviet. The resolution of the Petro-pavlovsk was tabled, and accepted by the majority of the assembly.

On the next day, there was a meeting of the delegates nominated by the sailors who were insisting on the necessity to hold regular and non-rigged elections. Wassilev and Kuzmin (political commissar of the Baltic Fleet) were there, and seeing the way the meeting was going, gave very tough speeches. The assembly for this reason forced them to abandon the meeting, and put them under arrest. The resolution of the Petro-

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pavlovsk was again adopted by a large majority, after which the assembly went on to examine details of the elections to the new Soviet. At this point the assembly was disrupted by dissenting voices, and on this point all historians of Kronstadt, whatever their political persuasion, are agreed—the communists prepared an armed attack on the meeting. At that moment the officer cadets (Kursanti) of the Political School were leaving Kronstadt in the direction of the Krasnaja Gorka fort.

A Provisional Revolutionary Committee was created, with Petrichenko as President. He was a character with a shady past, who later became fully committed to the counter revolution. Under the aegis of this Committee, the sailors occupied the strategic points of the city, and took over state buildings. "Committees of Three" (the famous troika) were organised at every military building, and in every armed corp. They also occupied the print shop for Izvestia, so that the next day, March 3 the first edition was produced under the control of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee and read thus,

"The Communist Party, master of the state, is cut off from the masses and has demonstrated its incapacity to lead the country out of confusion. The Party has not counted for anything since the disturbances in Petrograd and Moscow. These clearly demonstrate that it has lost the confidence of the working masses. The Party does not take into account the workers demands, because it thinks that these disturbances originate from counter revolutionary intrigue. But this is a profound mistake."

Far from seeing the degeneration of the Party as being the result of an objective process, it is considered as the result of the thirst for power of some "leaders". The Kronstadt sailors were unable to go beyond this limited framework. Throughout Kronstadt the idea was that authority had prevailed over its opposite, liberty, the victory of evil over good.

The same day Radio Moscow put out this call to the country;

"As for the struggle against the White Guard plot; the mutiny by the old general Kozlovsky and the Petropavlovsk has been organised, like all other White Guard insurrections, by spies of the Entente. This can be deduced from the fact that two weeks before General Kozlovski's revolt, the French journal, Le Matin published this despatch from Helsinki: "We have heard that, following the recent Kronstadt revolt, the Bolshevik military authorities have taken a series of measures to isolate the city and prevent the soldiers and sailors of Kronstadt from entering Petrograd". It is thus clear that the Kronstadt revolt is directed from Paris..and that the French counter-espionage service is involved. History is repeating itself. The SR's, directed from Paris, are preparing the way for an insurrection against Soviet power; but as soon as they have done this the real bosses behind them would appear-the Tsarist generals. The history of Kolchak who would have replaced the Social revolutionaries and put himself in power, is once again repeating itself."

The Bolsheviks' accusation was an exaggeration, but nevertheless it contained incontestible truths, which we will discuss before going on to deal with the relationship between Kronstadt and the international counter-revolution embodied in the organisational capacity(or incapacity) of the Russian refugees even more than the "Entente spies".

One thing can be said straightaway. Though Kozlovsky (whom the official radio pretended was the leader of the insurrection) played an important role, his position was politically ambiguous. General of the Artillery, he had passed over to the communists for reasons of political convenience. At the time of the insurrection, he was in command of the Kronstadt artillery. According to

the regulations, since the Commander of the Fortress had fled Kozlovsky should have stood in for him. It seems certain that he refused, because he did not want to recognise the authority of the Revolutionary Committee. But he remained at Kronstadt as a technician and artillery specialist. But this role was no different from that of the old officials of the Tsarist regime who were used as technicians by the Bolsheviks, including during the repression of the insurrection of the Kronstadt sailors.

We now come to the revolt itself. This was preceded by many twists and turns in events which we don't have room to go into here. On 5th. March the Committee for the Defence of Petrograd put out a call to the insurgents, inviting them, not too politely, to put themselves under the direction of the central authority. The title of the appeal was "This is the point you have reached". Its contents are summed up in the following:

"They tell you stories, saying that Petrograd is with you and that Siberia and the Ukraine are with you. All this is a lie! Petrograd has abandoned you, right down to the last sailor, as soon as it knew you were led by generals like Kozlovsky."

This was the truth. In Petrograd the insurgents had neither the workers nor the sailors support. The Party had brought the full weight of its negative propaganda to bear. The appeal continued:

"A handful of adventurists and counter-revolutionaries has endangered Kronstadt. French counter-espionage spies are acting behind the Petropavlovsk sailors. They tell them that the struggle is about democracy, that they don't want blood to be shed, and that in the insurrection, not a single shot will be fired, all in the name of democracy. For such a "democracy" they fight together with French spies, Tsarist generals and their loyal hangers-

on, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries. The leaders of the plot say they have taken power without firing a shot, that this was possible because the Soviet power wanted to resolve the conflict peacefully. But this cannot last for long. The international bourgeoisie is raising its head, there is rejoicing in the enemy camp...Comrades, once again the Petrograd Soviet says to you; it depends on you alone whether or not your brothers' blood is spilt, and whether, despite the vile desire of the enemies of the working class, their bloody intentions are turned against them. This is our last warning. Time is passing; decide quickly; join with us against the common enemy, otherwise perish shamefully with the counter-revolution."

the Provisional revolutionary Committee replied with an address, "To All..." The gist of the message being hurled against "a group of crazy communists" was certainly revolutionary, but at the same time it cannot claim to be part of a communist strategy in the Leninist sense of the term, that is the strategy of the period before and after October, which Kronstadt had agreed with at that time.

Against a "degenerated" communist party" it might have seemed almost too obvious to demand the right to expel the corrupting gems of the careerist bureaucrats coming from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. But the protest went beyond a straightforward revolutionary approach, and instead took a libertarian course which saw parties as such as the incarnation of all evil. This reflected the incapacity already mentioned, to draw correct conclusions about the process underway in the difficult situation of Russia at that time. But this is not enough to explain which aspects of the revolt inspired the circles of anti-Bolshevik reactionaries abroad, who, as we documented above, had knowledge of the event at least one month before it happened. Had the reactionaries who

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were apologising for the revolt become converted to the Leninist watchword of "All Power to the Soviets"? No! So had there been connivance between the leaders of the revolt and the international revolution? The fact is that the Kronstadt naval base was certainly animated by a sincere revolutionary spirit; slogans opposed to this would have been rejected outright. This would explain the astute attitude of the leaders of the revolt, who, though to the left of the communist party in words, took refuge in Finland once the revolt was suppressed, and fell into (or more accurately re-entered) the arms of the counter-revolution, with which they shared ideas and positions. These ranged from a vaguely reformist nationalism, to the practise of terror against the "red power".

On March 7th., after futile negotiations between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Revolutionary Committee and after the surrender telegramme sent from Trotsky (president of the Military Revolutionary Council of the Soviet Republic) to the insurgent garrisons, the Red Army launched the assault on the Kronstadt fortress.

The fighting was very fierce, and besides the morale of the Red Army called upon to fight their brothers did not encourage a hasty solution of the conflict. Some elements displayed indecision, while others (the 560th.) passed over to the insurgents. The Party sent its best cadres to improve the morale of the badly clad and shod troops, who were an easy target for the machine guns of the Kronstadt fort. The Red Army losses were very high; one estimate of dead and wounded is 25,000, but the American Consul cuts the figure to 10,000. The insurgents' losses were less; there are no reliable figures, but there were probably 1,600 dead and wounded, and 2,500 sentenced by the military tribunals.

The fighting lasted till March 18th. On the evening of the 17th, the central leaders of the revolt (11 members of the revolutionary Committee, including Petrichenko, Kozlovsky and Solovianov) took refuge in Finland, as

the Bolsheviks had predicted. With the news of the flight of their own leaders the men let the Soviet command know that they were about to surrender. Thus a revolutionary dream had been transformed into a bloody nightmare.

THE POLITICAL CURRENTS AT KRONSTADT.

The Kronstadt revolt is a crucial moment in the history of Soviet Russia. This explosion coincided with the crisis in the revolutionary institutions, itself the reflection of a crisis which grew with the capitalist encirclement and the failure of the international revolution. How can the experience of the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers be judged overall? From a political viewpoint judgement cannot be categorical. Because the revolt was linked to a complex and contradictory reality, it is both a moment in the repression of the revolutionary instinct of the masses, and a moment in the degeneration of that instinct, since it was entangled with many aspects of counter-revolutionary ideology. It was an experience of confused rebelliousness which had more than one point in common with various widely divergent political programmes.

It is a mistake to think that, had NEP been launched earlier, the spilling of so much blood could have been avoided. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks resorted to NEP to deal with the dire situation produced by the effects of the crisis, which itself produced Kronstadt. So what was NEP? A solution to the political degeneration which had objective causes, which was being felt in all ranks of the party? Not at all! With hindsight we can see today that NEP was the coup de grace to the last remaining gains of 1917. Yet many of the demands of the Kronstadt communards coincided with the measures of NEP. If the objective situation could not be reversed, the NEP was the consolidation of a process which would lead inexorably towards a new form of capitalism. Lenin clearly recognised this, and urged that NEP should not lose its temporary character. However, from reaching this modus

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vivendi, Russia passed uninterruptedly via Stalinism to become the imperialist power that we are familiar with today.

But let's take our analysis further, and examine the political currents inside the revolt. Not so much to connect them to the people who led the revolt (Petrichenko was clearly a Social Revolutionary, Valk and Romanenko Mensheviks, Orescin Populist and Lamanov Maximalist), but to deduce the extent of their incompatibility with the regime led by the Bolsheviks. It is clear that the demands of the sailors were not dictated by any group or political party directly. But it is equally true that the ideas of different currents had spread within the revolt, leading to contradictory effects.

For example, let's consider the Mensheviks. How would they have been able to reconcile their demands for free Soviets, with their self-proclaimed gradualist parliamentarism, as the means of evolution towards a "higher form of democracy"? Such a programme stands for the return of the situation which existed in the aftermath of February 1917, ie the maintenance of the capitalist state, deemed necessary for the creation of the conditions most favourable to socialism. From a revolutionary standpoint the Bolsheviks' accusation of counter-revolution is well-founded and more than justified.

However, the Mensheviks scarcely influenced Kronstadt, and wavered a lot over what position to take up. The majority stood aside from events, and imagined that after the disorder, they would be able to impose some sort of democratising influence on the institutions of Soviet power. A large branch of dissidents, however, opposed the view of the central committee, and signed the following leaflet,

"down with the lies of the counter revolution. Who are the real counter revolutionaries? They are the Bolsheviks, the commissars, Soviet power. The real revolution

is rising up against them. We must all support it. Kronstadt calls for help. It is our duty to help it. Long live the revolution! Long live the Constituent Assembly!"

The rights SR's made the most active attempt to ride the tiger of the revolt. Their main slogan "Find a way ofousting the Bolshevik dictatorship's repugnant and bloody regime", was combined with a direct appeal to "those of all political shades who want to tread the path of liberty and democracy which has the Constituent Assembly as its crowning glory". Such watchwords would have found short shrift in the naval base and amongst the Kronstadt workers.

In spite of this Chernov, ex-president of the dissolved Constituent Assembly and recognised leader of those who saw the Soviets as a support for it, thought that the Kronstadters scorn for the Assembly was due to a survival from the previous influence of the Bolsheviks. For this reason a message was sent via an ordinary sailor, to the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, from which we quote:

"The president of the Constituent Assembly, Victor Chernov, sends his fraternal greetings to the heroic comrades, sailors, soldiers and workers who, for the third time since 1905, have shaken off the yoke of tyranny. He proposes to send reinforcements and an intermediary to secure supplies for Kronstadt, with the aid of Russian co-operative organisations from abroad. I am ready to come personally to put my power and authority at the head of the popular revolution. I am confident in the final victory of the working people. News is coming in from every area of the readiness of the masses to rise up in the name of the Constituent Assembly. Don't let yourselves be deceived into opening negotiations with the Bolshevik power: attempts which will be used

to buy time and to concentrate the most reliable troops of the Soviet Guard around Kronstadt. Glory to those who from the first have raised the standard of popular liberation! Down with the despotism of Left and Right! Long live liberty and democracy!"

The Revolutionary Committee sent this reply in a radio message:

"Having received from Reval the greetings of Comrade Chernov, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of the city of Kronstadt expresses to all our brothers who are abroad its profound thanks for the sympathy shown. The P.R.C. considers it must thank comrade Chernov for his proposal to come, but we call on him to refrain for the time being until the question is clarified. For the moment his proposal is taken into consideration. Signed: President of the P.R.C. Petrichenko 3. March 1921".

Petrichenko hadn't accepted the offer of help because he knew that it would have been difficult to tolerate such a heavy external intervention in a movement which, if confused, was authentically revolutionary. In fact he had not refused Chernov's proposal outright, but had personally communicated to him to wait 12 days, at the end of which the situation might have changed making it possible to launch the slogans requested by the SR's. Given the drastic situation, it would not have been impossible to starve the sailors in order to finally open the door to the forces of bourgeois democracy and with it the counter-revolution including Chernov and co, who were doing their best to hatch dark plots. All this is doubly confirmed by one of the members of the Revolutionary Committee-Perepletkin- who fell into Bolshevik hands, and confirmed that Petrichenko had secretly sent Chernov a positive reply.

On the other hand the Left SR's, without having taken an active part in the

revolt, are perhaps the most recognisable political element in the Kronstadt programme (resolutions of the Petropavlovsk). While the SR's were the most consistent political expression of the peasants, it is also true that the Kronstadt events were strongly influenced by their programme. Anarchist ideas also influenced events. For example Perepletkin, himself a member of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee professed, "There is no need for power, what's needed is Anarchy." The deep disillusioning experiences which the sailors had experienced from Red October onwards, led many to a similar way of thinking. The Anarchists in Russia could only add to the confusion, by trying to reinvent a revolution which was already failing.

They saw the party as an organ destined to wield power in an absolutist and dictatorial way. The party's degeneration is viewed, without taking into account the underlying causes of the degenerative process which together led to the failure of the Russian revolution as a whole. Instead the anarchists saw it as irrefutable confirmation of their traditional analysis. In this scenario social conflict, rather than being seen as a dispute between classes, is depicted as a dispute between two opposing tendencies; authority on the one hand and liberty on the other. The fact that the first is a universal characteristic of the dominant class cannot be explained plausibly by anarchism.

KRONSTADT AND THE RUSSIAN EMIGRATION.

According to the soviet press at the time, the sailors were influenced by the Mensheviks and SRs in their ranks. On top of this, Pravda added: "the ex-Tsarist generals were laughing". This supports those who see it as a plot, carefully organised by Russian emigres, with the collusion of the French counter-espionage service and the imperialist forces of the Entente.

A network of Red Cross organisations was accused of supporting the plot: the International Red Cross, the American

Red Cross and the Russian which was based in Finland. As proof that the uprising had been organised by anti-Soviet groups in Paris, the Bolsheviks relied on the news of a revolt at Kronstadt which had flooded the French press two weeks before it actually happened. The New York Times also reported similar news and went so far as to state that the 'rebels' had assumed total control of Petrograd, even clashing with troops sent by Trotsky to 'dislodge' them. In reality nothing of the kind took place in February 1921, neither at Kronstadt nor any other Baltic base.

These sorts of rumours were not unusual. International capitalism was trying every way to discredit the soviet regime: the only regime in the world which, despite the thousands of internal difficulties it had been through, remained the only reference point for the world proletariat. But by strange co-incidence such rumours foresaw what would really happen a short time later. All this is in the context of the Russian ex-patriots who were organised in various groups. Amongst these was a well-known one with the name of National Centre (or National Union), a heterogeneous coalition of Cadets (Constitutional Democrats) and numerous other species and sub-species of moderates and reactionaries, with a central office in Paris. Its aim was to "overthrow Bolshevik power". The National Centre had actually drawn up plans for an uprising at Kronstadt where the core of its forces were concentrated (apart from those at Moscow, Petrograd and in the fortress of Krasnaya Gorka). This kind of initiative was not new: in 1919 it had been involved in the attempt by General Yudenich, aided by the British and with naval support, to conquer Petrograd. In the archives of this organisation there is a manuscript headed "top secret" and entitled "Memorandum on the organisation of a revolt at Kronstadt".

The Memorandum proposes a detailed emergency plan for instigating the revolt and from its content can be dated to January, or at the latest, the beginning of February 1921. The

author is well informed about the situation at Kronstadt and describes its fortifications:

"Information from Kronstadt prompts us to believe that there will be a revolt there next Spring. If its preparation has some outside support, one can count with certainty on the success of the revolt, given the following favourable circumstances.....

Amongst the sailors numerous unambiguous signs of mass discontent with the existing order can be observed. The sailors will unanimously join the ranks of the insurgents if a small group of individuals seizes power at Kronstadt by rapid and decisive action. Such a group has already been formed amongst the sailors and is ready and capable of carrying out the most energetic actions. If power is seized in the fleet and in the fortifications at Kronstadt secure control of the rebellion will be acquired as well as over the other forts in the immediate vicinity of Kotlin island. The artillery of these forts have a firing range which prevents them reaching Kronstadt, while the Kronstadt batteries can concentrate their fire on the other forts (the "Obruchev" fort) which had rebelled in 1919 and surrendered only half an hour after the Kronstadt batteries opened fire against it.

From the above it is clear that exceptionally favourable conditions exist for a successful revolt at Kronstadt.

1. The presence of an extremely compact group of energetic organisers for the revolt.
2. A corresponding tendency to rebellion amongst the sailors.
3. Restriction of the zone of operations, delimited by the perimeter of Kronstadt, which will assure the total success of the revolt.
4. The possibility of preparing the revolt in complete secrecy,

assured by the fact that Kronstadt is isolated from the rest of Russia and by the homogeneity and solidarity of the sailors..."

"Besides the danger of Kronstadt surrendering to the Bolsheviks if there are no food supplies, there is also the danger of a collapse of morale amongst the rebellious sailors. This could provoke the restoration of Soviet power at Kronstadt. Such a collapse would be inevitable if the sailors had no evidence of support and sympathy from outside in particular from the Russian army under the control of General Wrangel. The same thing will happen if the sailors find themselves isolated from the rest of Russia, making it impossible for the rebellion to develop into the overthrow of Soviet power in Russia itself...

If it is intended that military operations to bring about the downfall of Soviet power should emanate from Kronstadt then it will also be necessary to despatch the Russian armed forces of General Wrangel. In this case it is well to remember that for such operations - or even the threat of them - Kronstadt can serve as an invulnerable base. The next objective of any Kronstadt action would be to render Petrograd defenceless, the conquest of which would mean that a good half of the battle against the Bolsheviks had been won...

Regarding the above, it should be remembered that even if the French command and the Russian anti-Bolshevik organisations do not participate in the preparation and leadership of the revolt, it will nevertheless still occur at Kronstadt next spring, but, after a brief period of success, will be condemned to defeat. This would greatly re-inforce the prestige of the Soviet power, and deprive its enemies of a rare opportunity which will probably never be repeated of seizing Kronstadt and

inflicting a very hard blow on the Bolsheviks, from which they would be unable to recover."

The author of the document has been identified as Tseidler, a Russian expatriot and Director of the Russian Red Cross in Finland. He was closely linked to Daniel Grimm, principle agent of the National Centre in Helsingfor, and official representative of the notorious General Wrangel in Finland. The National centre was working with other emigre organisations, including an organisation of emigre journalists, the Russian Union.

But who belonged to the "extremely compact" group at Kronstadt, on which the memorandum placed its hopes? Many historians, including those who cannot be accused of sympathy towards the Bolsheviks, have pointed to Petrichenko and his collaborators. The agreement between the Centre, and the Kronstadt ex-Revolutionary Committee would seem to prove it. (In May 1921, Petrichenko and several of his comrades enlisted in General Wrangel's army.) Moreover, many of its members, 11 out of 15, found safe refuge in Finland, and this could be the sign of a long-standing relationship. However, it should not be forgotten that the Revolutionary Committee had accepted the Red Cross offer, as this was "a philanthropic and not a political organisation". Moreover, the fact that reinforcements had not appeared, was unquestionably due to the indecision of the Entente states, who did not want to rule out the possibility of developing commercial relations with Russia which, after the victory over the White Guards, was forced to open its doors to foreign markets for obvious reasons. A successful revolt must have seemed almost impossible to the Entente. In the eyes of the imperialists, the Bolshevik government would have been the "legitimate" side to talk to.

And this, sadly, foreshadowed what was to be. The failure of the Russian Revolution, the reversal of the process of building socialism, the gradual but inexorable re-opening to the capitalist market, and subsequent capitalist deve-

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lopment of the entire economic structure of that Russia which, like the Paris Commune 50 years previously, had dared to "assault the heavens"

A THIRD REVOLUTION OR REACTIONARY PLOTS?

The theory that the Bolsheviks considered the Kronstadt uprising to be simply a conspiracy by the Entente spies is definitely true. Innumerable government documents of the time also prove it. But while Lenin's detractors use this to point to the biased nature of such theories, it should be added that, propaganda apart, the real nature of the situation was well understood by the representatives of the Party. On 15th. March Lenin himself stated peremptorily "at Kronstadt they wanted neither the White Guards nor our power". Also it should be pointed out that the spontaneity of the sailors, once the "honour and glory of the Russian Revolution" (Trotsky) was taken advantage of by skilful international centres of counter-revolution, which nurtured a swarm of lie mongers at Kronstadt. This opinion was shared by Victor Serge, witness to the events, of which he wrote in 1937:

"Hoping to unleash the elements of a purifying storm, in reality the sailors could do no other than open the doors of a counter-revolution which would soon have benefitted the White intervention from abroad. Insurgent Kronstadt was not counter-revolutionary, but its victory would have led inexorably to the counter-revolution."

In July 1921, at the 3rd. Congress of the Communist International, Bukharin also repeated the argument:

"The documents which have been brought to light clearly show that the event was instigated by centres which were exclusively White Guard, but at the same time Kronstadt was a petty bourgeois rebellion against the socialist system of organising the economy from above. Who says that the Kronstadt revolt was a White revolt? No, in the

Name of our ideal, in the name of our duty, we have been forced to suppress the revolt of our wayward comrades. We cannot consider the Kronstadt sailors to be our enemies. We love them as our true brothers, as our flesh and blood."

This interpretation was fairly widespread inside the Party; above all amongst the leadership. Perhaps the fiercest opposition to the attempts to recuperate the mood behind Kronstadt (which, although confused, was nevertheless revolutionary) came from Trotsky

There are two reasons for this. The first is linked to the entire policy preceding the uprising (regimentation of work, militarisation of the unions, etc) of which Trotsky was one of the principal promoters and towards which was directed the harshest criticism of the Kronstadt sailors and workers. The second reason clearly reflects the fact that Trotsky himself was the most determined advocate of the necessity for repression; repression which was carried out under his direct responsibility in his capacity as representative of the highest office in the military hierarchy. Thus he wrote in 1938 from his Mexican exile:

"If we don't want to deceive ourselves with pretentious slogans, with false labels... we must realise that the Kronstadt uprising was none other than the armed reaction of the petty bourgeoisie to the harshness of the social revolution and to the severity of the proletarian dictatorship.. The insurgents hadn't a conscious programme and couldn't have had one by the very nature of their petty bourgeois composition."

This analysis correctly points out that "consciousness" was undoubtedly in the hands of the "elements of the Right which were acting behind the scenes" and which had no other aim than the

"restoration of the bourgeois regime". Naturally there were different interpretations amongst the insurgents. An opposite view was expressed in the following terms:

"At Kronstadt the foundation stone of the third revolution has been laid which will break the last chains binding the working masses and will open up a new road for the creation of socialism."
(Izvestia, 8th March 1921)

OUR REPLY

What exactly was the Kronstadt revolt? Was it a counter-revolutionary insurrection aimed at bringing back capitalism to Russia? Or was it rather a "purely motivated" event which tried to rectify an already compromised situation from a revolutionary point of view? Or was it a revolutionary attempt which would nevertheless have irremediably opened the way for national and international reaction? Kronstadt was a popular insurrection, strongly marked by a genuine revolutionary mood but containing confused elements which in themselves were very harmful. The revolt initiated a systematic repressive and authoritarian policy, at both the political and economic level, which daily undermined the revolutionary conquests of Red October. Bolshevik policies, in their turn, were a direct consequence of this process of degeneration which naturally engulfed the whole process of the socialist transformation of society. This degenerative process could not avoid hitting the Communist Party itself, making it unable to prevent a historic course which was already dramatically defined (by the isolation of Russia, the failure of the revolution to expand internationally). Nonetheless, the Bolsheviks' policy contained serious errors which, as we have seen, accelerated the process of revolutionary degeneration. In this sense, Kronstadt is both the response to the degeneration and at the same time the product of this same process. Kronstadt forgets the lessons

of Marxism-Leninism and sets out from a social dialectic characterised by a vaguely democratic perspective stemming from anarchoid influence. The spontaneous forces of the revolt were even more incapable of doing what the Communist Party was unable to do. The regressive process could not have been halted simply by splendid acts of will but only by an objective change in the international situation. That situation, however, showed that the class was already in a period of retreat, of progressive and inexorable defeat, and amongst the bourgeois imperialist forces there was a tendency towards disturbing forms of militarism and an openly reactionary settlement. And reactionary forces were indeed present at Kronstadt. The Russian emigres, indirectly supported by the imperialist forces of the Entente, were plotting. Plotting and scheming too were the provocateurs inside the revolt. Given these last two points, the repression of the revolt - even if it opened up a chapter of deep agony in the workers' movement, had more than enough reasons to justify itself. Any other solution would have allowed an even more rapid consolidation of the counter-revolution in a historical period where the motive force for a revival of the international revolution was not completely spent. An expansion of the revolution would have been able to give life and breath to agonising Russian socialism (remember that the last gasps of the world proletariat included the German revolution of 1923 and the Chinese in 1927 which definitively closes the chapter of revolutionary initiatives by the class). But these are the immediate responses which spring directly from events at Kronstadt. They pose ideological and, more specifically, political problems.

At the beginning of this article we posed precise questions regarding the state of relations between the party and demands, both central and peripheral, made on it, and consequently the state of relations between the party itself and the proletarian masses. Above all, this involves understanding how far the party had already changed,

or was being changed, with regard to the original Leninist precepts on the nature and function of the class party.

It is easy to explain the process of progressive degeneration of the party in terms of it succumbing to the process of retreat away from the revolutionary experience begun with October. Clearly, objective processes end up gaining the upper hand over subjective ones and over all other movements at every level of society. But such a formulation would be a poor substitute for dialectical materialism and would reduce determinism to the worst sort: the mechanical kind.

The party, as the concretisation and realisation of communist consciousness, must have adequate weapons to resist such a process. If its cadres cannot, by pure acts of will, inverse historical tendencies which are determined by structural changes, they can prevent the revolutionary organ being one of the degenerative elements and part of the very causes of the degeneration.

Yes, the party is an expression of the class struggle, above all in its unitary political platform of the working class. But organisationally it is the product of human will, as expressed by its militants and its own leading organs in order to fulfil the communist programme by overthrowing the existing order, which is to say, in the words of Damen, "the return of human will over things".

The concept of the inevitability of the party's degeneration is an old one which stinks of opportunism a mile away and is linked to mechanical anti-Marxist analyses. The party will undoubtedly be influenced by external factors but it is not mechanically linked to these by an immediate cause-effect relationship. Here we have to take into account the difficulties encountered by the Bolshevik comrades. Faced with thousands of different pressures and counter pressures a correct course not only became difficult, it is doubtful whether it was possible. Very often tactical concessions were made in order to buy

time to deal with the enormous problems which loomed with overpowering urgency, and any other stance than that adopted would have also meant immediate defeat.

There is no quick and easy solution. Perhaps the only guarantee we can point to (apart from the certainty that there will be objective difficulties) is the non-interruption of that dialectical relationship which must exist inside the party. Put simply, this relationship is democratic centralism and apart from being a method for regulating the internal life of the party, it also incorporates the way society is run in the period of transition.

Democratic centralism exists outside of the party and has mutual implications for the relationship between the party and the class. Even in the transition period democratic centralism governs the party and the workers' state and synthesises the demands of the revolutionary power: the Soviets.

What was the state of relations between the party and the class at the time the Kronstadt revolt broke out? And the relationship between party and soviets? The communist Party was already well advanced in its detachment from the masses. Detached as a consequence of the break in the ever precarious equilibrium between communist consciousness and the spontaneity of the class. Thus on one side consciousness (in the Marxist sense of the term which always relates to the class struggle, to direct participation in the revolutionary power) was no longer provided with an appropriate supply of creative demands brought forward by the masses (in this specific case we are talking about masses who had been the bearers of a victorious proletarian revolution).

The dialectical relationship which would have had to continue to involve both sides no longer existed. This only assisted the growth of divergent needs between them. The party's reference point began no longer to be the class and the class began no longer to identify with the party. The

sympiosis between spontaneity and realised capacity, between realised potential and revolutionary science, suffered a very hard blow and a separation which became more and more distinct.

But if the party's reference point was no longer the class, what did it refer to, this party which had been the most efficient revolutionary organ the proletariat had ever produced? Unfortunately the latter does not guarantee that the party will remain revolutionary. When one speaks of the dictatorship of the proletariat it must have a precise meaning in reality. It must refer to a class which, organised in its own state, directly tends to transform capitalist society into an associated community of "free and equals". This is a fundamental Marxist Leninist concept which, however, is only half digested by many self-styled revolutionaries who, by the following reason provide us with a clear example of rigorous formal logic which is a thousand miles away from a revolutionary Marxist conception: the communist party has no interests apart from those of the working class and is also, very correctly, the most advanced part of the class; therefore, what else can the dictatorship of the proletariat be but the dictatorship of the party? This is ideological ground which it is a complement to define as opportunist. Perhaps the identification of the Russian Communist Party with proletarian power has had the degeneration of both as its epilogue?

The problem is not one of establishing what might have happened if the party had had a different relationship to the class and to the organs of its dictatorship. It is rather one of considering, in the light of experience, what methods should have been used to preserve the party in the context of the historic course which was progressively underway. In other words, the failure of the revolution, which is to say the capitalist changes to the economic structure of Russia, above all with the implementation of NEP, could only be followed by the party, in its capacity

as "embodiment of a specific situation" attracting to itself all the demands of the various forces in civil society. (In the absence of a revival of the international class movement, which unfortunately was not to be.)

What was there left for the Party to do? Comply with the process of degeneration which had occurred, or summon all the courage which revolutionary communists must possess, and pass over to the opposition? That is, cut itself off from all relations to a power whose objectives were no longer in line with the historical perspective of socialism, and instead consider the possibility of re-arming the Party, with a strategy and tactic towards a new perspective of struggle. In other words, to pose before both the party and the state of the bureaucrats, the Kulaks and the peasants, the fundamental irreconcilability of opposing interests, and to explain that the objective situation was resolving the problem of which social strata were becoming the dominant class, which would have to exercise the most iron dictatorship over the proletariat of the Soviet Union.

Instead the situation in Russia took the opposite course. The Soviets were exhausted and, far from becoming revolutionary instruments of power, organised and run from below under the guide of the working class party, they became appendages of the latter. They were decision making organs separate from the party only in purely formal terms. Between party and soviet there cannot and must not be any confusion, either in the pre-revolutionary, or in the transition period. In the same way there must not be confusion between party and class. No party, being dragged into the counter revolution, can keep its ideological and political integrity.

At what point did the Bolshevik Party assume responsibility for the development of the forces of counter-revolution? The discussion can be divided into two parts. In the first period, the Party would have been able to reject these tendencies, and still have had room for political action. This became more difficult with War Communism,

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where profound errors were committed which influenced the whole future course of the counter-revolution. An example of this is the blocking of any proletarian initiative in the life of the class, in the form of the forced militarisation of labour. In the second period, which is linked to the first, the term "error" is no longer justified and the party comes closer and closer into harmony with the forces of the counter-revolution, which extends into the party, the soviets and every aspect of Bolshevik power (the period of the consolidation of the NEP). Thus begins the historical course towards Stalinism, until the Russian state reaches a *modus vivendi* with the international counter-revolution.

In conclusion, we can state that this analysis is the most satisfactory treatment, from a theoretical and political standpoint, of that problematic issue, the relationship between party and class. This relationship is the basis for correctly posing the problem of power in the period of transition towards socialism. The problem itself is concretised in the position taken by the party at the time it links itself to the dictatorship of the class and to the organs of revolutionary power. In the final analysis we are concerned with the relationship which must exist between the class party and the working class state. As it says in the Platform of our Party,

"The state of the proletarian dictatorship, stemming from a successful revolutionary movement is an achievement of the international proletariat.. Only the workers' state, maintained on the path of revolution by the Party cadres, who must never confuse themselves with the state, nor merge with it, will be able to systematically take all the necessary measures in the social economy by which the capitalist system will be replaced by the socialist administration of production and distribution....."

At no time, and for no reason, does the proletariat abandon its combative role. It does not delegate to others its historical mission, and it does not delegate its power away by proxy, even to its political party."
(Platform of the PCInt. p4,6.)

This is the lesson which comes to us through Italian left - communism, which has counted within its ranks different generations of highly valued comrades. They have left us these theoretical acquisitions which spring from living struggles, and which are verified by the continual clashes of classes, resulting from the internal contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. Leaving aside party evaluations, and its use to support "correct analyses" of a sectarian nature, the Kronstadt episode was a result of objective causes, and of the failure to resolve the above mentioned problems of party, class and state relationships, which lay behind the revolt itself. Kronstadt is the consequence of the class struggle which is always present, and will be till communism exists; a class struggle carried to extremes. "But the main point", as Trotsky said, "is that excesses spring from the very nature of the revolution, which is itself none other than an excess of history".

Franco M.

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R.P. AN INTERIM OBITUARY

This edition of Revolutionary Perspectives is, at least for the present, the last in the current series. The CWO has reasons both practical and political for such a step. The practical reason is that, with the formation of the IBRP, the CWO has taken on the responsibility for producing its English language Communist Review. The physical and financial burden on our limited resources of the maintenance of two theoretical journals was too great. While not dismissing the possibility that at some future date when resources allow, we may resume publication, we envisage that in future the task of theoretical development hitherto assumed by R.P., will be subsumed into C.R., which will also continue its role of international contact and political confrontation, and thus have a wider function than hitherto. (For anxious readers, existing subscriptions to R.P. will be honoured, via. transfer to C.R., or extension if the sub. was a joint one.)

However, there are also political reasons for the change. R.P. was first published in 1974, and has overseen the development of the CWO from a group heavily influenced by its councilist origins, to our present position as heritors of the traditions of the Italian Left. In this sense, R.P. has done its work, in a long and painful struggle to restore the doctrines of revolutionary Marxism, and introduce them into the political situation in Britain. While much theoretical work still remains to be done, it will proceed from a different political basis and it is thus appropriate that it will have a new platform for publication in C.R.

We intend to continue our policy of re-issue of the most important texts from R.P., in pamphlet form, as we have just done with texts on economics from the issues No2 and 8 of the journal. In addition we hope to publish new material in pamphlet form, when they are unsuitable for publication in C.R. In the meantime, we have limited copies of back issues of R.P. available (see over).

BACK ISSUES OF REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES.

- No 14; Main text is, "Communist Organisation", which deals with the role and function of the Party.
- No 15; Main text is, "Marxism and Ireland", this outlines the history of Ireland, and combats reactionary nationalism.
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- No 17; Main text is on "Imperialism", and deals with the theories of Luxemburg, Bukharin and Lenin.
- No 18; Sold out.
- No 19; Main text is on, "Theories of State Capitalism", which surveys the Russian economy, and demonstrates its capitalist nature.
- No 20; Main text is on, "The Democratic Revolution", and shows, by a critique of the (now) C.P. of Iran, that it is "a programme for the past".
- No 21; Main text is on, "Class consciousness in the Marxist perspective", and emphasises the role of the Party against ideas of a spontaneist nature.
- No 22; Main text is on, "The Origins of Trotskyism", and shows that this tendency has its origins in the counter-revolution.

Orders, with payment, to the group address. Copies are £1.00 each post paid. ONLY the above are available.